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An Investigation into Partnership Working to Widen Participation in Higher Education in the South-West of England, with Particular Reference to Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs)

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An investigation into partnership working to widen participation in higher education in the south-west of England, with particular reference to Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs).

Volume 1 of 1

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Education
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Sheila M Leahy

ABSTRACT

Partnerships between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs) were a specific recommendation of the 1997 Dearing Review and a major component of New Labour's 'Third Way'. Between 1997 - 2010 one of the key policy drivers was to widen participation in higher education with a target of 50% participation of 18 - 30 year olds by 2010. Funded partnerships were seen as the mechanism to achieve this target. Arguably partnerships between higher education (HE) and further education (FE) were not new. Many of the so-called 'post-92' universities which had previously been polytechnics had achieved growth through partnerships with FECs and considered themselves, perhaps, to be leading the way in widening participation. Among a plethora of policy initiatives, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) embarked on its own innovative partnership scheme, Lifelong Learning Networks. Drawing heavily from examples in North America, these were conceived as a way of achieving planned progression into higher education for students with vocational qualifications at level three. The response from the higher education sector to the initiative was equivocal at best and the results uneven. This study draws from Bourdieu's early anthropological studies and combines aspects of these with his study of the fields of the arts and higher education to propose a new reading of the policy response and practice of widening participation in higher education through partnerships.

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Glossary of Acronyms

| | |
|----------|--|
| ASN | Additional Student Numbers |
| CAN | Sheffield University Associate College Network |
| CATS | Credit Accumulation & Transfer System |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CHL | Cumbria Higher Learning (Lifelong Learning Network) |
| CUC | Combined Universities of Cornwall |
| CWLLN | Coventry & Warwickshire Lifelong Learning Network |
| CWLLN | Cheshire & Warrington Lifelong Learning Network |
| BBCSLLN | Birmingham, Black Country & Solihull Lifelong Learning Network |
| FEC | Further Education College |
| GMSA | Greater Manchester Strategic Authority |
| GMWLLLN | Greater Merseyside & West Lancs Lifelong Learning Network |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEI | Higher Educational Institute |
| HETP | Higher Education Training Partnership |
| HFEHEC | Humber FE/HE Consortium |
| H&IWLLN | Hampshire & Isle of Wight Lifelong Learning Network |
| H&WLLN | Hereford & Worcester Lifelong Learning Network |
| HPCET | Huddersfield Consortium Post-compulsory Education & Training |
| HUDCETT | Huddersfield University Combined Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training |
| KMLLN | Kent & Medway Lifelong Learning Network |
| LHEC | London Higher Education Consortium |
| LLN | Lifelong Learning Network |
| LLLN | Lancs Lifelong Learning Network |
| LSC | Learning & Skills Council |
| MBFEC | Matthew Boulton Further Education College |
| MOVE | East of England Lifelong Learning Network |
| NEHSN | North East Higher Skills Network |
| OFFA | Office of Fair Access |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| RIU | Research Intensive University |
| RUN | Regional University Network |
| RUP | Regional University Partnership |
| SELLLN | South East London Lifelong Learning Network |
| SKILLSSC | Skills South Central |
| SLN | Sussex Learning Network |
| SLLLN | South London Lifelong Learning Network |
| SUPP | Somerset University Partnership Project |
| SSC | Skills for Sustainable Communities |
| SSSTWLLN | Staffordshire, Shropshire, Stoke on Trent, Telford & the Wreakin Lifelong Learning Network |
| SURF | Staffordshire University Regional Federation |
| SWLLN | South West Lifelong Learning Network |
| SYLLN | South Yorks Lifelong Learning Network |
| TEU | Teaching Excellence University |
| UBPC | University of Bedford Partner Colleges |
| UCS | University College, Suffolk |
| UE&SEEC | University of Essex & South-East Essex College |
| UPC | University of Plymouth Colleges |
| US&FEP | University of Sunderland & Further Education Partners |
| VETNET | National Veterinary Lifelong Learning Network |
| WLLN | West London Lifelong Learning Network |
| WVLLN | Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network |
| WYLLN | West Yorks Lifelong Learning Network |
| YHLLN | Yorkshire & Humber East Lifelong Learning Network |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

i. Widening Participation - A Core Value?

Participation policy has generally been about making more places available to meet the needs of society in a changing labour market. The catalyst for this policy making between 1997 - 2010 was the 1997 Dearing Report which set out a first principle of:

"...maximum participation in initial higher education by young and mature students and in lifetime learning by adults, having regard to the needs of individuals, the nature and the future labour market...[where] links between higher education and other parts of the education and training system, particularly further education, are increasing in importance" (Dearing 1997)

However, it would appear that this is not always the case, since the 50% participation target by 2010 was not achieved despite a significant increase of public funding being put into higher education.

Having spent a career in further and higher education, I was aware of partnership arrangements between Further Education Colleges (FECs) and generally at departmental Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Most of these had been informal, until the mid-1990s when a further expansion of the number of higher education (HE) places found HEIs making partnerships with FECs simply to acquire extra teaching to accommodate the new type of students on courses that became known as Year 0 of a bachelors degree.

ii. Rationale underlying the study

Partnership working in higher education has, it would appear, become a given; at least in terms of securing access to HEFCE funding for widening participation activities. Parry (2006) states that partnerships were "semi-regulatory" but, despite their significance in delivering higher education policy in England, there is little academic writing about them. What documents there are, tend to be in three broad groups: reviews of the implementation of policy; descriptions of the internal

operations of partnerships and good practice guides; or evaluations of the outcomes of partnerships. I could locate only one other doctoral thesis on the subject of partnerships and further searches of relevant databases produced few results. The theoretical frameworks, where they are used, are generally management improvement models or, more often just atheoretical evaluations. Surprisingly, since partnership working is a social phenomenon, there appears to have been no deployment of sociological theory as yet. The literature available is written from the perspective of higher education in universities looking at partnerships; there is nothing about looking at partnerships from the further education perspective (notwithstanding the work of Parry and Thompson 2002). Partnership working in general and in relation to widening participation in higher education would seem to be an under-researched area of policy activity.

iii. The Problem

Partnerships concerned with widening participation in higher education are about achieving outcomes which contribute to social justice. Normally, it is the product of the partnership which gets the attention, not the way the partnership has influenced the individual institutions. Widening participation policy assumes a structural change in the way things are done. It assumes that if a greater number of places are made available, these extra places will go to those who would traditionally not have attended a university. To make this happen, individual institutions within the partnership would need to change practices (admissions practices in particular). This also assumes that all individuals within an institution buy into widening participation and see it as part of the core business. (See Allen 2005 for a discussion about whether academics were signed up to the target.) Yet, the target was not met.ⁱⁱⁱ

iv. Aims and Objectives of the research enquiry

The overall research aim is to: provide new theoretically informed insights into the nature of partnership working in the overall policy strategy to widen participation with particular reference to the South-west region of England. In particular, to assess whether existing inequalities in status and resources between institutions militate against the successful working of partnerships. Within this overall aim three questions were posed:

1. Has partnership in higher education been an effective way of changing the practices of widening participation?
2. Have the partnerships changed existing structures and hierarchies in the field of higher education? If so, to what effect?
3. What are the characteristics of the partners' views and practices concerning the hierarchical structure and status of institutions within the field that were brought to the partnership arena?

v. Structure of the thesis

The literature review in Chapter two proposes an adaptation to Bourdieu's theory of the field of higher education and introduces the concepts of restricted and open field in order to provide an explanatory context for the partnership phenomenon. In addition selected elements from Bourdieu's anthropological work are proposed to explain the practices associated with the institutional habitus at work in partnerships on widening participation.

Chapter Three concerns the research method and methodology and outlines how this was influenced by Haig's (1995) approach to grounded theory as method and Bourdieu's (1988) method for researching the field. Difficulties with the enquiry are highlighted.

Chapter Four outlines the Bourdieusian-based account of the field of HE with the various national formations of partnership within the field of higher

education and their responses to widening participation policy. Where possible, examples are given from the South-west region of England.

Chapter Five focuses more closely on the field of higher education in the South-west of England and the field response to the incursion of the Lifelong Learning Partnerships into it. The habitus of individuals and institutions is illuminated. .

Chapter Six analyses how far the case study illuminates the proposed theory. In addition, the difficulties in the research enquiry are considered. Suggestions are made for further study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

i. Introduction

This enquiry is about a specific aspect of social inequality that is concerned with the admission of students into university in relation to the impact of a particular type of partnership work to widen participation in higher education. If, as Scott asserts:

"universities act upon that most sensitive of all interfaces, between academic excellence and democratic rights [and]... help to reconcile the competing claims of elitism and entitlement"
(Scott 2012a p. 33)

the admissions process is crucial to the way a university chooses to exercise its role in supporting (or not) the Labour government's policy of fair accessⁱⁱⁱ. The 1997 Dearing Report set out a comprehensive agenda for change which included: a new qualification (the foundation degree (Brown 2005; Brown and Munro 2006)); new universities (previously Colleges of Higher Education); and, a strategy to increase the number of higher education places by making degrees (or the first two years of a degree) available in Further Education Colleges (FECs). The Report urged universities to work in partnership with FECs to develop curriculum and access routes.

i. A review of the literature: partnership as a tool of public policy

By far the greatest body of work on partnerships in higher education focuses on impact studies. An early example is Abramson's (1996a) edited book on partnerships which provides a number of case study accounts and discusses policy and practical issues. More recently, Cardini's (2006) work on the rhetoric and practice of partnership working is relevant to this study in that it highlights some of the key issues relating to policy implementation. In particular, this study is indicative of the problems with partnership as a mechanism for change when the funding is

time-limited and the commitment of partners may last only as long as the funding. Cardini studied partnership working in the school sector such as Educational Action Zones. She highlights the mismatch between the policy vision of partnerships as enabling efficient, devolved participation in decision making with the reality that they facilitate and support centralized policy making. The context of Cardini's study is New Labour's 'Third Way' of conceptualizing partnerships as an original and superior form of organizing social welfare (p. 394); an alternative to state intervention or market approaches. Features of the New Labour approach were multi-agency partnerships, including the private sector, which were based in discrete areas and intended to focus on the needs of that area. Cardini's research indicated that many such partnerships were simply set up as an avenue to receive public funding rather than a true coming together to solve the problems (p. 408). Cardini concludes that partnerships represent a re-organization of the traditional relationship and boundaries between the state, civil society and the economy (pp. 409/10) and acted as an idealized interpretive symbol (p. 411) which masks the reality that some sectors and agents benefit more than others from partnership activities.

The policy implications of partnerships between HEIs and FECs encapsulated in the shorthand term Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) provides a context for this study. The policy analysis work of Gareth Parry is particularly relevant in this (2002; 2005a; 2005b; 2005c; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009). Parry has written extensively on the 'hidden' higher education work carried out in FECs. He reminds us of the 'special mission' given to FECs by the Dearing Commission in 1997 to stimulate demand for higher education at sub-degree level through the new Foundation Degree award. Parry analyzes how the Dearing Report's intention of FECs combining with HEIs to expand higher education provision was realized as structured partnerships where the FECs became dependent on the HEI partner for funding. Parry, through comparison with the Australian and North American systems, calls for the term further education to be

abandoned and to develop an open system of colleges and universities (Parry 2005a p. 14). His studies are relevant to the study of Lifelong Learning Networks (LLN) as the LLN model was based on a North American model - the Wisconsin model - which is discussed further below.

Finally, there is one in-depth account of the impact of government policy to promote partnership working to widen participation in Anderson's (2004) study. This is an account of four early HE in FE partnerships where the field work was carried out between July 2002 and April 2003. The research enquiry was concerned with exploring the contribution that HE in FE partnerships make to the government objectives for widening participation through an analysis of two different funding models: the funding consortium and the franchise model. Her respondents believed in the value of what they were doing but the benefit could not be translated into measurable performance indicators. She concludes that there appeared to be a growth in the number of HE students in partner colleges but it was impossible to identify how much of the growth was as a result of the work of the partnership (p. 7). She offers a thematic framework of barriers to effective partnership operation and critical success factors in effective partnerships as a kind of management model of good practice. Critical success factors include, for example, clarity of purpose, strategic level drive, and, the integration of the partnership into the structures of the partner institutions. Anderson observes that:

"partnerships are seen as holding the key to delivering the government's 50% target". (p. 152)

Anderson's study was primarily intended for the author's own institution to become more effective in its partnerships activities. It is thus limited in its application to this research enquiry but provides an example of the type of work carried out by others. The remaining literature located about partnership working in higher education is largely intended to provide insights into how to improve its outcomes (Edwards, Loveys et al. 1993; Institute for Access Studies 2003; Universities Uk 2007; Bussell

and Mulcahy 2009; Aston and Schutt 2010). Analysis of internal institutional policy and practice to widen participation practices appears to be limited to two studies which do not mention any partnership working. (Greenbank 2007a; Hoare, Bowerman et al. 2011)

There are several case study accounts of particular instances of partnership working including mergers (Garrod 2005; Bathmaker, Brooks et al. 2007; Franklin and Robinson 2010). Much of this work is atheoretical; where theory has been deployed it is derived from management improvement models and is primarily concerned with good practice guides.

ii. Partnerships as a sociological phenomenon

A partnership can be a nebulous, transient formation, particularly where it is set up under a time-limited funding model. It then occupies an ambiguous position being neither part of any of the institutions from which it draws members, nor legally existing in its own right. For a multi-institutional partnership to be able to carry out activities, it must be able to act as a repository for various appropriate resources. These resources, and how they are deployed within the context in which the partnership operates, form the basis of this study. In sociological terms a partnership exists to achieve goals which no party to the partnership could, apparently, achieve on its own. Partners come together at an institutional level to effect change in line with the institutional objectives that they represent. The driver for change to widen participation through partnership working has been government policy, which individual HEIs, particularly those with a high degree of autonomy, can apparently decide to follow closely - or not. Institutions which do respond to policy drivers, are, however, represented in the partnership by individuals who may bring their own views and opinions to the partnership arena. These may or may not be in line with the institutional objectives, or with the partnership objectives. Partnerships then work in various ways at multiple levels: at the national policy level; at the institutional level; and at the individual level of the member. The latter because the

individual may be required to reflect the desires of the partnership back into their own institution.

The very existence of such partnerships, however, reveals the exclusionary nature of the current institutional practices in higher education. As higher education provision in England has moved from an elite system educating the children of the wealthy, to a mass system, arguably educating the work force, individual institutions have adopted stances and positions which reflect and influence their practices in relation to the policy of widening participation. These stances are influenced by a number of factors which work together in complex ways. These include: the institution's history and development; its position and view of itself in relation to other higher education institutions (HEIs); the values and views of the individuals within the institution, which can vary according to their level of operation; and the influence, or not, of government policy on the work of the institution. This short description of the complexities of partnership working does not, however, indicate one of the unstated aspects of partnerships. According to Bourdieu (1993) partnerships can also be a tool for managing conflict and tension particularly in response to an incursion of government policy. I will address this key aspect of partnership working in Chapter Five.

The expansion in the number of places in higher education (one form of widening participation) has been achieved in a number of ways: through the building of new institutions (universities); through the licensing of higher education curriculum to other institutions (franchising); through the merger and incorporation of elements of higher education taught at other institutions; through the renaming of polytechnics as universities and allowing their expansion into academic areas of education; and through the naming of other institutions as university colleges. More recently, the expansion has taken a different route and conferred degree awarding powers to private organizations, and colleges not named as universities.

In this study I follow the definition of higher education as described in the 1997 Report of the Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing 1997) that higher education is learning at level 4 and above, which is subjected to the quality assurance systems of the Quality Assurance Agency for England (QAA) (2010)^{iv}. This definition then lends itself to a single field of higher education, with multiple agents of different types operating in tension and conflict as they try to gain position or protect their position, and their associated capital. If the traditional sites of higher education are universities and university colleges, then the new sites of higher education are FECs. Each type of institution has its own history and approach to higher education and to widening participation practice. While they may be in the same arena, each occupies a different part of the arena which partnership working seeks to bring together.

It is from this precept of a partnership as a source of tension by the requirement to form them from institutions in different parts of the field that I seek to apply a further adaptation to the current perception of the field as applied to higher education. The adaptation is the application of an element of Bourdieu's theory previously applied to the field of art production - that of restricted and open field (Bourdieu 1983). So far as I am aware, this conceptual adaptation has not yet been applied to the field of higher education. The theory states that within a single field there may be divisions which are defined by the level of autonomy of the agents and their ability to influence the field of political power. Within the field of higher education, universities (a restricted group) enjoy significantly greater autonomy than FECs which are located in the open field. This adaptation can illuminate more clearly, I believe, the different approaches and outcomes of partnership working and their impact, or lack of it, on widening participation and fair access practice.

I now wish to look into each aspect of partnership working to widen participation in higher education in more depth. The literature review discusses Bourdieu's theory of capital, habitus and field in detail in the contexts of the concepts of restricted field

and open field and the strategies imposed upon and adopted by individual institutions. As far as possible, the dynamics of Bourdieu's approach are maintained throughout the discussion.

II. Capital, Habitus and Field

Bourdieu's approach to analyzing a social practice was encapsulated in a shorthand form as:

"[(capital) (habitus)] + field = practice" (Bourdieu 1984 p. 95).

Bourdieu's analytical approach was selected for this enquiry because of its dynamic potential and reflexive approach. By this I mean firstly, that it allows for the interplay between the structuring forces of the social world and the agency of individuals which seems pertinent when discussing the practice of widening participation; and, it allows for each element of the analysis to be influenced by every other element; and, lastly, it allows for the researcher to be present in the research, a point which is elaborated in Chapter 3. What follows below then is a brief description of each theory element and an analysis of how it relates to higher education; a discussion of the theory element as deployed in the relevant literature pertaining to higher education; and a discussion of the use of the theory element in relation to the practice of widening participation in higher education through partnerships. The basic theory of field, capital and habitus is then described and contextualized into this study through a deeper analysis in each section.

I. Capital

i. Introduction

Importantly capital (as defined by Bourdieu (1986)) does not function unless it is associated with a field. A field is a space of struggle and conflict where agents seek to increase or maintain their share of the field capital. The capital associated with the field of higher education is the value of a degree. The field struggles are aimed at preserving or transforming the configuration of the forces which determine

the value of the capital^v. The strategies adopted by the agents in the field depend upon their position in the field (by distribution of capital) and on the perceptions they have of the field (the unconscious disposition, or habitus). The distribution of capital governs success in the field (Bourdieu 1993 p. 30). It is only at the level of the field that it is possible to grasp both the generic interests associated with taking part in the game and the specific interests attached to the different positions (Bourdieu 1984 p. 4). A field capital can be influenced by the distribution of resources from another field such as the political field. This is described by Kupfer (2011) in relation to research funding, who points out that government funding can be rigged to support the already elite institutions, thus ensuring the most elite institutions have the best resources, which may lead in turn to the highest ranking.

Williams and Filippakou (2010) have analyzed the relationship between the university attended by an individual and their subsequent inclusion in Who's Who – a national directory of 'important' people. They conclude that very senior employment positions are slowly being occupied by people who were educated outside of the very elite Universities of Oxford and Cambridge (Oxbridge). This confirms Bourdieu's position that the habitus and capital of higher education are open to change; however, it also demonstrates the slow rate of change. More particularly, the debates about university rankings and league tables and their impact on widening participation in higher education are important in the context of social capital accumulation within the HE field because rankings are a source of prestige.(Morley and Aynsley 2007; Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (Cheri) 2008; King 2009; Ellen 2010). The greatest capital is likely to be obtained from the most elite universities. Elite universities work to keep their high ranking in order to continue to attract those seeking to maximize their capital accumulation. Students who may fall into the widening participation categories (i.e. from different educational backgrounds), even when very academically able and well prepared, are less likely to apply^{vi}. Elite universities may participate in the exclusion

of the academically able who may not be able to deploy the appropriate personal cultural capital to gain entry^{vii}. League table rankings and reputation are frequently cited as counter-productive to widening participation (Leathwood 2004; Locke, Verbik et al. 2008)

“There is perceived tension between league table performance and institutional and governmental policies and concerns (e.g. on academic standards, widening participation, community engagement and the provision of socially-valued subjects). Institutions are having to manage such tensions with great care” (Locke, Verbik et al. 2008 p. 9)

Academics have criticized the policy of partnership in relation to widening participation in higher education as a way of individuals obtaining greater social capital generally (Jones and Thomas 2005). More specifically, firstly widening participation for individual capital growth is criticized as being insufficient and undermined by the introduction of tuition fees (Callender 2002; Brown 2007a; Davies, Mangan et al. 2008; Mccaig and Adnett 2009); and, secondly that the policy failed to address the inequality present within with university system between elite universities and the others (Leathwood 2004; Hall and David 2008). Archer, for example, describes how universities are divided into gold, silver and bronze ((Archer 2007 p. 638) levels; gold being research intensive universities (RIU); silver being teaching excellence universities (TEU); and, bronze being local higher education in FECs. In Archer's view, local higher education, in FECs, is considered to be the appropriate location for placing non-traditional students; the place where widening participation in higher education occurs.

“The task of widening participation is not shared out equally between all HEIs. Rather benchmarks are set according to the circumstances of individual institutions...” (Archer 2007 p. 641)

These criticisms indicate some of the ways in which the capital of the field of higher education is protected.

ii. Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital, is a form of transubstantiated economic capital (Moore 2008) Bourdieu states that it resides in the

"mastery of symbolic resources based on knowledge and recognition" (Bourdieu 2005 p. 195)

which he describes as being

"in the form of prestige and renown [symbolic capital] is ready convertible back to economic capital " (Bourdieu 1977 p. 179)

It is in this sense that I use the term. The symbolic capital of the most elite part of the restricted field is concerned with prestige: prestige acquired through research excellence and outstanding quality. However, less elite universities and institutions in the open field attempt to claim this prestige capital for themselves, by association.

King notes:

"regional and other universities have sought to orient themselves, and aspire to, the academic distinction and style of Oxbridge" (King 2004 p. 13)

If the capital of the field is about the value of a degree, in England degrees from different institutions have the same standard (and by implication the same value).

As King notes:

"...in the UK the notion that all degrees are of a comparable standard is strongly adhered to" (King 2004 p. 11)

This notion causes a problem for the most elite part of the field of higher education which responds by seeking to differentiate themselves from the rest of the sub-field through research excellence and league table rankings. The most elite element of the field adopts strategies which seek to protect capital through field positioning in a number of ways. Firstly, institutions form themselves into position groups which are an attempt by the restricted field to further restrict access to the most elite form of capital. Position groupings (such as the Russell Group) are a subtle way of demonstrating that actually, some degrees have a better standard and value than others. Membership of individual institutions into position groups accrues another

sort of capital: positional group capital. Positional group capital is concerned with multiplying the symbolic capital effect through the elimination of competition and the acquisition of greater influence on the field of political power. Secondly, the most elite institutions demonstrate their symbolic capital through adopting a position of disinterestedness in the struggles in the rest of the field and fail to participate in widening participation policy activities (Vasagar 2011). This failure to practice widening participation is a form of symbolic violence or domination. Lastly, the most elite institutions resist the influence of the political field to change their own practices, and refract the policy formation onto other parts of the education sector, notably schools (Byrom, Thomson et al. 2007). For example, elite institutions seek to raise aspirations in schools through participation in Aimhigher partnerships, rather than examine their own admissions practices. The impact of this form of field positioning on partnership working to widen participation is discussed further below.

Newby asserts, following Brymmer, that:

“it cannot be claimed that graduating from higher education is the prerequisite for the accumulation of social capital, but...[elite] graduates are the most likely to manifest these qualities” (Newby 2004b p. 8)

Maton (2005) is clear that the field position taken by an institution reflects that institution's habitus and relationship to the field of political power and produces the institutional practice which in turn reflects the field of positions. Where an institution is dominant, its position is likely to be conservative to preserve capital; where it is dominated, it is likely to be more radical and seek to increase the volume of capital. In particular, for powerful institutions widening participation is refracted away from traditional elite universities as a problem with schools and individuals (p 695). By implication, there is thus nothing wrong with elite university practice to support widening participation. It is the fault of another part of the education system if appropriate candidates do not present themselves.

However, Little's discussion of institutional collaboration and co-operation identifies internal issues which may affect university practice. She states that the

challenge is how to shape the values and interests of staff in partner institutions beyond the core group of the actual attendees at partnership meetings. (Little 2009 p. 11) A further extension of this problem of leadership is identified by Maton (p. 701) in that agents (Vice-Chancellors) charged with instituting heteronomous principles (changing the role of the university) increasingly come from beyond the field of higher education. This is a reference to universities recruiting to leadership roles from candidates whose experience is in other fields such as business or the civil service. Further, he views the current further weakening of the autonomy of the restricted field of higher education as being "the revenge of the refracted" (p 702). Those excluded from elite positions of capital formation through their own higher education, find a way into a position of influence in the political field. Some then criticize those elite institutions which previously excluded them through the exercise of their symbolic power. This may be less visible in the current Conservative government in which a significant number attended elite universities.

"Seven in ten (69%) Ministers attending Cabinet, and a half (50%) of Ministers were educated at either Oxford or Cambridge universities. This compares with three in ten (31%) backbench MPs from the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Parties in the 2010 Parliament, and 28% of all MPs, who attended Oxbridge." (Sutton Trust 2010)

The capital of a field needs to be understood in relation to the habitus of the individuals and institutions (the agents) operating in the field.

II. Habitus

i. Introduction

Habitus is "fuzzy and vague" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and is described by Bourdieu as:

"a set of dispositions which induce agents to act and react in certain ways...these dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular'" (Bourdieu 1991)

The dispositions would be as a result of an organizing action; a way of being (a habitual state); or a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination (Bourdieu 1977 p. 72). Bourdieu asserted that the

“field and habitus function fully only in relation to one another ...[the field is a] space of play....players enter into it who believe in and actively pursue the prizes it offers” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 p. 17)

These dispositions are durable (Bourdieu 1991 p. 13) and the product of history which produces practices which are the past, surviving in the present and perpetuated in the future (Bourdieu 1977 p. 82). However, Bourdieu emphatically believed habitus was not eternal and was capable of changing. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 p. 123). Habitus is, however, a ‘feel for the game’ which implies acquiescence to the field conditions and to the strategy deployed as an individual agent and by other agents. Habitus applies to both individuals and institutions, the latter through ethos, culture and mission statements.

ii. Criticisms of Habitus

Habitus is, perhaps, the most criticized part of Bourdieu’s theory. Moore (Moore 2008) states that Bourdieu rejected any criticism of it as reductionist, and rejected any linking of it to structural positions such as “middle-class habitus” (p. 113). Bourdieu believed that habitus was a space of the possible and provided an opportunity for a new gaze. It was a means of maintaining but relating dualisms such as the individual and society. Habitus is above all relational. Habitus is important in this study because it relates partnership working to the field and to the capital deployed. It exposes the institutional practices in relation to widening participation in a way that field theory alone cannot achieve. In this way, the deployment of habitus with field can answer one of Naidoo’s identified limitations of field theory as an explanatory framework for describing the process of exclusion through admissions policies (Naidoo 2004). She believes that field theory does not allow the process by which educational principles are produced to be understood.

She states that this limitation may be overcome by discourse analysis of documents and interview transcripts (p. 468). In my view, this is akin to acknowledging habitus working within the field. Field may provide a way of explaining the position of the institution within the field but it is habitus which may indicate the process behind the position.

iii. Application of Habitus to higher education research

In relation to habitus and capital, the concept of elite within a field has particular implications. In the elite part of the field, the habitus is likely to be a valuing of the traditional irrespective of its impact: Bourdieu uses the analogy of being a 'fish in water' (1983 p. 14) to describe how those with similar field positions, whose habitus comes from the same generative influences, and, most importantly, those with similar field positions relative to the field of political power, will group together to protect their capital through the exercise of symbolic power. Symbolic power requires that those subjected to it believe in the legitimacy of that power and the legitimacy of those that wield it (Bourdieu 1991 p. 23)

Habitus is probably the most frequently deployed element of Bourdieu's theory in educational research (Reay 2004). It has been used to explain the attitudes to lifelong learning of adults in a rural setting (Atkin 2000); about educational choice (Reay, David et al. 2001; Slack 2003); a discussion of ethics in management in higher education (Zipin and Brennan 2003) and as a way of interrogating data (Reay 2004). Pertinent to this discussion is the debate about what constitutes 'real' higher education. In the view of some university academics (Jones 2006 for example) real higher education occurs only, apparently, in a university. However, the recognition of the phenomenon of HE in FE, is a consecration of the open field by the restricted field, which ultimately undermines that position. Therefore the elite part of the field adopts a position of condescension which questions the quality of the work of FECs in delivering higher education

(conveniently forgetting that HE in FE is covered by the same quality framework as in a university).

iv. Applying the concept of habitus to higher education

Although characterized by Bourdieu as fuzzy and vague, Bourdieu does identify a number of dispositions within habitus. I propose to select several elements from Bourdieu's studies of marriage and rural hierarchies, which preceded his work on education. I have selected four aspects and suggest below that these can be used to explicate the practices related to the institutional habitus which surround widening participation. In this way, the general common sense understanding of habitus is clarified into particular dispositions. Bourdieu's early work in Algeria and the Béarn was anthropological in nature and included extensive observations of dispositions, perceptions, and, actions which generated practices among the groups observed. This study concerns partnership working and there is an analogy between partnership and the marriage customs, and the behaviour of the hierarchical groups studied by Bourdieu. These dispositions are gift exchange, disinterestedness and trust. From his work studying the field of art, the notion of clientele is also important to this study.

The analogy between patterns in matrimony and partnership working are clear. Bourdieu noted that the strategy utilized by individuals facing marriage was based on improving their position in the field. He saw that the marriage partnership was endlessly negotiated according to individual circumstances. Individuals had an interest which is defined by their circumstances and which allowed them to act in a particular way in order to improve their position. Interest is the link between field and habitus - "interest is habitus incarnate" (Grenfell 2008 p. 154). Interest is used to draw attention to social practice as an economic game; as a link between the material and social world. For example, the partnerships to widen participation are

imbued with interest. FECs want to improve their position by offering higher education which is believed to provide kudos. Some HEIs want to improve their position in the field by committing to supporting government policy to widen participation in order to obtain funding.

v. Gift Exchange

The first element of habitus that is relevant to this study is that of generating a lasting relationship of reciprocity, (Bourdieu 1977 p. 186), of trust, by gift exchange (Bourdieu 1977 p. 95). Gift exchange is a form of symbolic power where the symbolic exchange always rests on a foundation of shared belief. The hierarchical nature of the relationship is tacitly acknowledged. Moreover, Bourdieu asserts that there is an active complicity on the part of those subjected to it. The dominated must believe in the legitimacy of the power and of those who wield it. Bourdieu first analyzed gift exchange during his studies in Algeria and saw it as a mechanism in which power is exercised and simultaneously disguised (Bourdieu 1991 p. 23). Gift exchange is a form of debt which creates a lasting obligation that binds the recipient. Further, Bourdieu claims that:

"the temporal structure of gift exchange...makes possible the existence of two opposing truths, which defines the full truth of the gift" (Bourdieu 1977 p. 5)

He observed that the gift from the less powerful partner may be taken by the powerful partner but not reciprocated for a significant length of time. The more powerful partner having the time to decide. This is a luxury the less powerful partner does not have. This is pertinent to partnership working where HEIs may take significant time to decide on their response to widening participation policy while holding the funding the FECs need to operationalize the policy. The gift exchange in partnership working to widen participation in higher education is access to funded places provided by the university, and access to widening participation categories of

students provided by the FEC. Institutions entering partnerships to widen participation implicitly realize this reciprocal state and seek to use their access to the capital under their control to achieve their own outcomes. However, the universities apparently feel no sense of obligation to continue to provide places once the funding ends^{viii}.

vi. Disinterestedness

Gift exchange is closely related to the second element of habitus important to this study – disinterestedness. According to Grenfell, Bourdieu argues that there is no such thing as a disinterested act (Grenfell 2008 p. 165). Further Bourdieu observed in Algeria that noble families cultivated a "disinterested habitus". The aristocrat has to be generous and sub-ordinate his own self-interest to that of those around him in order to justify his title. It could be inferred that universities position themselves as servants of the state and of their partners while their interest lies in having the state and their partners at their service (Grenfell 2008 p. 167). Further Bourdieu claims that:

"...these dominated dominants are only able to enhance their interests by associating them ...with causes that appear to them to be universal...those who are the disinterested defenders of universal causes might...have an interest in disinterestedness." (Bourdieu 1998 p. 382)

A partnership may be paradoxical in that the participants want to exchange their gifts but the lead HEI may not view widening participation as part of its core business. At a base level, the institution will use the partnership to achieve its own goals, not necessarily those of the political field funding the partnerships or of the FEC partner. Therefore, any interaction by agents in a field is defined by the structure of the relation between the groups the agents belong to (Bourdieu 1977 p. 81) There is always a

"link between actions and interests...even when they give every appearance of disinterestedness" (Bourdieu 1991 p. 16)

A partnership could be described as a “delegation of authority” (Moore 2008 p. 113) which removes the activities of widening participation away from the main institutional work. On the one hand, this could be seen as a sign of lack of interest, on the other it could be seen as a management strategy to preserve the status quo. Wacquant observes that the dominant operate a strategy of:

“condescension...reach[ing] down...[the] dominant profits from their relationship of domination...by denying it” (Wacquant 1989 p. 46)

As an example of this denial, at an institutional level, a university may seek to take control of student numbers placed with the FEC, or retain control of the funding and the additional student numbers (ASNs) which allowed for wider access, rather than giving them to the local FECs. Where the strategic direction of the university changed, partnerships could be wound up or placed under major review.^{ix}

The relationship between gift exchange and disinterestedness is complex. In a partnership each partner brings something to the table which the other needs or wants. In relation to widening participation in higher education, the gains are additional income and meeting targets for the HEIs and, fair access for the FECs as well as increased access to capital and improved position in the field. However, the HEI cannot be seen to be over dependent on the partnership to achieve targets and policy commitments. If it is, it could be argued that their own internal strategies require revision, thus the response is generally cool. Arguably, the lack of awareness inside many HEIs of the partnership activities their institution is engaged in is an example of the general disinterestedness.

vii. Trust

The third disposition which is important to this study is the interpersonal relations often described as trust which builds through partnership working. Trust is generally considered a good thing, a positive force for change. However, Bourdieu has other views on this:

“Interpersonal relations are never, except in appearance, individual to individual relations and the truth of the interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction” (Bourdieu 1977 p. 81)

Trust appears to be the counterpoint to the conflict which underlies partnership activity. On the one hand, the university is trying to protect its position and avoid dilution of its capital; while on the other, the FEC is trying to obtain access to position and capital currently held by the university. Trust is built up over time. Time is a valuable commodity to deploy in a partnership. Those wealthy in capital (at least economic capital – such as controlling the funding of a partnership) have time (and power) to invest in obtaining their own goals. Those lacking in capital want access to it – to spend the funding. Spending the funding may not be in the best interests of the funding holder who may delay the deployment of it until its own objectives are reached; or until such a time, or in such a way, that the deployment of the funding has minimum impact on their position or capital. Kupfer observes that the:

“vectors of power relations within an [institution]...cannot be understood without reference...to the vested interests of the key players within it” (2011 p. 191)

Trust in an individual does not automatically lead to trust in an institution, or vice versa. This discrepancy may account for a feature of ‘good partnership working’ which seems to rely on the reputation of powerful individual members to promote the partnership interests to their institutions. Kupfer further argues that where an institution’s structural position in the field is less significant, personal or identity capital will take on greater importance (p. 195). This observation seems to be important when considering Lifelong Learning Networks where the reputation of the lead institution and staff were, arguably, crucial to their success.

viii. Clientele

A further element of Bourdieu’s theory that is relevant here is the notion of clientele. This is a relationship of dominance and submission where each

relationship is the product of complex strategies. The value of the relationship for the dominator is the “prestige of possession of a 'clientele'” (Bourdieu 1977 p. 90) Bourdieu describes this relationship in the context of high art and high-end art dealers. The dealers control how the artist is perceived by the public. This relationship is mutually beneficial and exclusive but with an element of control within it^{xi}. According to this theory, it can be argued that HE in FE partnerships are about the HEI exercising client-control and restricting the potential for influence by the FECs and any increase in the number of places available. Capital and habitus are characteristics of a field. In this instance the field of higher education which I now wish to discuss.

iii. Field

i. Introduction - Playing the Game

A field is the term used by Bourdieu to describe an aspect of the social world. It is a dynamic concept (Bourdieu 1993 p. 6). He cautiously characterizes it by analogy to a game (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 p. 98). The game is played in a space called a field; it has players (agents), usually divided into teams, who take on specific roles and positions in the game and follow pre-planned or happenstance strategies. There are rules (although these may not be codified or explicit) and boundaries. The game may be characterized by struggles and conflict. The trajectory of the game is to gain something. The game itself and the players within it are codified into a hierarchy of success and failure (winning and losing). By engaging in the game, the players agree it is worth playing and it is in this collusion that competition occurs (p 98). The value of the field as a conceptual tool for this study is that it operates at both institutional and individual levels. Thus a field can be formally defined as:

“a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions”
(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 p. 97)

The structure of a field, is:

“understood as a space of objective relations between positions defined by their rank in the distribution of competing powers or species of capital [and] is different from the more or less lasting networks through which it manifests itself” (p. 114)

I have selected several aspects of field theory which are relevant to this study.

These are: autonomy and the influence of the political field; symbolic violence, solidarity and ranking.

ii. Autonomy

Bourdieu saw the social world as being made up of a number of differentiated fields with different properties but which are all interrelated. The relationship is constantly changing. He characterized it as

“a complete web of crossing linkages among the multiplicities of fields in which various forms of social power circulate and are concentrated” (Bourdieu 1998 p. xi)

There is no field which takes primacy over others, however, Bourdieu acknowledges the especially powerful influence of the economic field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 p. 109). Crucially, the relationship of any given field to the field of political power (ultimately the economic field) determines its autonomy. An autonomous field is one that is:

“capable of imposing its own norms on both the production and consumption of its products” (Bourdieu 1984 p. xxvi)

Autonomy is a critical feature of the relationship between universities and the state.

King claims that there has been:

“a tacit, if not formal agreement that universities were to have relatively privileged forms of corporate autonomy provided they delivered the goods with educated and trained personnel...the extent of this...[is] quite marked in the UK [compared to the continent] (King 2004 p. 4)

The struggles within a field are about how autonomy is eroded by the introduction of new players who want to play the game and which may be more willing agents of the political field. Bourdieu describes this as the:

“power to impose the dominant definition...to determine the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle...[in the understanding that the field] may be radically transformed by an enlargement of the set of people who have a legitimate voice” (Bourdieu 1993 p. 42)

Much of the dynamic struggle and conflict within a given field is about maintaining or altering the retention of autonomy and the distribution of capital between agents with differing aims (Bourdieu 1991 p. 14) The struggle then is concerned with the boundaries of the field (or the membership) which Bourdieu describes as:

“the state...long lasting or temporary... of the struggles, and therefore, of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents” (Bourdieu 1993 p. 42)

Further he states that:

“participants to a field constantly work to differentiate themselves from their closest rivals in order to reduce competition and establish a monopoly over a particular sub-sector of the field” (Wacquant 1989 p. 39)

The most disputed frontier is with the field of political power (Bourdieu 1993 p. 43). Attacks on the autonomy of a field indicate the permeability of the boundary and the capacity of the field agents to protect it. King, in giving a history of the modern university and the development of autonomy claims that:

“...the traditional universities...have experienced greater changes and shocks from the introduction of a stricter external evaluative framework that affects...reputation” (2004 p. 19)

These shocks have been from the imposition of policy by the political field including the formation of the QAA to review standards. The autonomy of the field of higher education is determined by its ability to protect its institutional academic and administrative work from external determinants such as government policy (Bourdieu 1983 p. 9). The political field may be attempting to form and transform a vision of the social world through policy initiatives which some universities seek to resist as an attack on autonomy. In English higher education, the policy vision has been to widen participation through structural change: making more institutions available to offer higher level learning. To achieve this end, the political field needed

to mobilize the field of higher education to make these changes. It is an irony of the inter-relationship between the fields of political power and higher education that policy implementation requires the mobilizing of those resistant to change and upon whom their political power ultimately depends (Bourdieu 1991). This new policy trajectory posed a challenge to the field status quo. Higher education field agents with strong influence on parts of the political field then respond by mobilizing the previous beneficiaries of the elite capital of higher education, to mount a counter-attack to preserve the status quo as in the Laura Spence affair^{xii}. Thus one part of the political field (the House of Commons) may be trying to impose or lead change while another part (the House of Lords) may be trying to preserve the status quo. It is the influence of the elite beneficiaries of institutions in the field of higher education which appears to have enabled the autonomy of the restricted field to be reasonably protected to-date.

iii. Influence of the political field on institutional autonomy

More recently, Maton asserts that universities have had their autonomy weakened as higher education has become an instrument for achieving politically desirable outcomes. This has been achieved through tighter institutional controls (a conclusion also reached by Kupfer (2011)). However, he concludes that governments are reluctant to impose policy on universities (Maton 2005 p. 699). This study is important in the discussion about widening participation practice below and the impact of policy on institutional practice. Examples of the field of political power influencing the field of university education's widening participation practice can be seen in the demand for institutional widening participation strategies and, the formation of the Office of Fair Access (OFFA)^{xiii}.

Kupfer (2011), following Brown (2000) describes how the field of higher education is subjected to policy drivers of various types. These policy levers, she claims, are directed towards the properties of the field which are susceptible to them. The levers are rules and resources. The rules (of the game and of the

relationship between the field of political power and the field of higher education) can be manipulated. For example, Kupfer (p 190) hypothesizes that rules can be changed to restrict access to resources. She further argues that the policy rules have been changed in the UK and Germany and resources allocated in ways which reinforce the relative ranking of universities. She concludes that universities with good reputations obtain the benefit of rule changes and resource allocation. This in turn, further enhances their reputation. In this way, policy drivers rig the outcomes of their initiatives in favour of highly ranked institutions: thus preserving the status quo^{xiv}. She suggests that rules, resources, rigging and ranking are powerful explanatory tools for explaining the way that the political field influences the field of higher education. An extension of this conclusion, however, might be that universities, particularly those in the most elite areas of the field of higher education, and with the strongest influence on the field of political power, collude in these restrictive practices to their own benefit. Arguably, partnership working to widen participation in higher education is a direct challenge to this mutually beneficial status quo.

The policy drivers for widening participation were about changing the rules (of admission to higher education); were about re-distributing resources (to institutions who were able to meet the needs of different learners); and, were about challenging the practices of the most highly ranked institutions. Partnership work had the potential to overcome the rigging of outcomes through transparency of practice. The potential for change was supported by massive funding streams and a national target. However, unlike the research exercise funding which is, Kupfer argues, directly related to the rank and prestige of an institution; widening participation through partnership was not seen as prestigious. The most elite universities paid lip service or ignored it. It is the universities outside the most elite group which have competed for widening participation funding. Thus institutional ranking does not feature in quite the same way in this study. Arguably universities

which have done most to widen participation are now curtailing their activities in the light of the 2011 White Paper^{xv}. However, rigging may still be present as a number of universities have lowered their tuition fees in order to be able to compete for the places put out for competition (Harrison 2011)^{xvi}. Kupfer's study is essentially a study of the relationship between the field of higher education and the economic field – through the labour market. There is within it, perhaps, an overly deterministic view of the impact of policy funding on the autonomy and practice of institutions. Indeed, Scott's comment below concerning the threat of further restriction to its autonomy inherent in the 2011 White Paper reveals much:

“...universities receive block grants which they are free to spend as they decide, not as politicians or bureaucrats pre-determine...the government's closing of higher education's open frontier will be a betrayal of individuals and communities given hope by the expansion of recent decades...” (Scott 2011)

This comment raises questions about her rather universalizing assertion that policy funding can manipulate some HEIs course of action (Kupfer 2011 p. 189) particularly as HEIs still have significant levels of institutional autonomy. Indeed, a comment made regularly in my own research was that many universities existed before the formation of the state as we know it. The implication being that these institutions while not outside the state, were not completely directed by it either. Further, even in my own limited research enquiry, the approach to the use of funding varied considerably between institutions. It ranged from closely following the directions of the funding council to completely ignoring them. As noted by Fine & Green (2000) it is dangerous to formulate too close a connection between institutional capital and economic position as signified by the deployment of public funding.

iv. Symbolic Violence

As discussed above, any field is characterized by struggle and this is most often concerned with the boundary of the field and determining who has a presence in the field and, therefore, access to the capital of that field. Kupfer (2011)

importantly notes that the political field can change the “terms of competition” (p. 190) within a field which increases the conflict and tension between the field of higher education and the political field, as well as increasing the conflict within the field. If the competition includes allowing new institutions into the field then the structure of the field is affected as the new entrants seek to find their position through the adoption of various strategies. Entering into partnership with an established HEI is one such strategy. In discussing the art and literary fields of cultural production, Bourdieu saw the competition within the field as being about the

*“authority inherent in recognition, consecration and prestige”
(Bourdieu 1993 p. 7).*

This is especially true of a restricted sub-field where the production of capital (art works) is not aimed at a large-scale market. Authority based on reputation and prestige is purely symbolic and may not imply possession of increased economic capital. However, if this consecration of capital extends to the perceived value of certification from a particular institution then arguably symbolic capital can be transformed into economic capital. From this Bourdieu included in his theory of practice, the concept of symbolic power (or capital) based on forms of capital which are not reducible to economic capital. Academic capital is one such form (Bourdieu 1993 p. 7). Academic capital is described by Bourdieu as deriving from:

“a system of elite establishments of higher education...power relies on conversion into credentials as a means for self-perpetuation...guarantees preferential and speedy access to positions of command to the sons of those...who already monopolize them...” (Bourdieu 1998 p. xi)

The defining feature of symbolic capital is knowledge and recognition of accumulated prestige, honour or celebrity obtained from, for example, formal education in elite institutions. More importantly, however, symbolic power also contains within it the potential for symbolic violence. This is the invisible, often unrecognized, legitimation of power with the result that those excluded from the

benefits of capital accumulation participate in their own subjection. Brubaker states that symbolic violence is about the:

“production and consumption of symbolic goods, the pursuit of symbolic profit, the accumulation of symbolic capital, and the modes of conversion of symbolic capital or power with other forms of power...[a] misrepresentation of social reality” (1985 p. 754/5)

Widening participation in higher education is, according to this theory, a site of symbolic violence in that the institutional practices continue to be about inclusion and exclusion based on a doxic or traditional view of higher education. Thus, the restricted field of university-based education claims for itself access to elite knowledge. The stakes of competition between agents in the field are largely symbolic involving the protection of prestige and consecration of others deemed to be acceptable. The profit accrued from the elite part of the field is hidden under the guise of disinterestedness, as one who is not searching for profit at all. However, the elite part of the field is sustained by social aspirations of those within it, those wishing to enter it, and those who have benefited from it (Bourdieu 1983 p. 16). The elite part of the field is symbolically dominant and its dominance is unconsciously adopted by all permitted members (Bourdieu 1983 p. 39). For example, it has been observed that post-1992 universities (formerly polytechnics) strive to become like the Russell Group members (research-intensive establishments) (King 2004). However, Kupfer would argue that research funding does not follow this model; the funding going to the 'best' universities^{xvii}.

The sub-field of large-scale production, the open field, involves the notion of 'mass' and, can include private ownership for which the dominant concern is the bottom line, or accumulation of economic capital (Bourdieu 1993 p. 16). The large scale production, open, sub-field is symbolically excluded and discredited by the elite part of the field (Bourdieu 1983 p. 39) but at the same time, it borrows capital claims (prestige) from the elite part of the field (p 16). Importantly, for this study, the notions of canonized and non-canonized agents is a feature of the elite and open

field model (Bourdieu 1983 p. 34) These notions include which agents are recognized as belonging and which are excluded - the clientele. Recognition of the non-canonized, by the canonized, is problematic, however, as the mere recognition of the new agents in the field, gives credence to their status as field members.

“...participation in the struggles – which may be indicated objectively by the attacks that are suffered – can be used as criterion establishing belong[ing] to the field of positions takings...” (Bourdieu 1983 p. 34)

And

“Those richest in specific capital and most concerned for their autonomy are considerably weakened by the fact that some of their competitors identify their interests with the principles of hierarchization and seek to impose them ...the most heteronomous cultural producers (i.e. those with the least symbolic capital) can offer least resistance to external demands...to defend their own positions they have to produce weapons, which the [field of political power] can immediately turn against them...[i.e. those] most attached to their autonomy” (Bourdieu 1983 p. 41)

Within the field of higher education, the notions of prescribed higher education funded by HEFCE (2011b) and non-prescribed higher education (Clark 2002) funded by the Skills Funding Agency (2011) are relevant here. Non-prescribed higher education has, from some view points, a negative image (Parry and Thompson 2002 p. 20). This amounts to a further differentiation between the most elite part of the restricted field and the open field.

v. Guise of Solidarity

Bourdieu believed that the field was characterized by conflict and competition but that this was hidden under a guise of solidarity.

“those who occupy the dominant positions in the various fields are united by an objective solidarity based on a homology between their positions, they are also set against each other, within the field of [political] power by relations of competition and conflict” (Bourdieu 2000)

In English higher education, universities generally express this solidarity by belonging to a membership organization - Universities UK (2010) Additionally, most Universities and University Colleges belong to one of five membership groups: the

Russell Group of research-intensive universities (RIU) (2010); the 1994 Group (2010); the University Alliance (2010); the Million+ group of universities engaged in enterprise (2010) and, the Guild HE comprising University Colleges (2010). Each of these groupings could be said to represent a restriction of the field in that by grouping together the members are seeking to work in unity and to exclude others; thus attempting to protect their version of the capital accruing to their part of the field. They are also seeking to minimize competition within the membership and maximize competition with those in other groups. This is the solidarity effect. However, all universities are also in direct competition for league table positions (Kupfer's ranking effect). This is the paramount struggle within the restricted field. Figure 1 below charts these positional groupings and their relationship to each other and to the field of political power. An analysis of the implications of these field positions in relation to widening participation practice is given in Chapter Three. The position of the two equivalent membership position groups for FECs are also charted in the open field. This diagram, and the ones that follow in succeeding chapters are intended to indicate one possible mapping of the field.

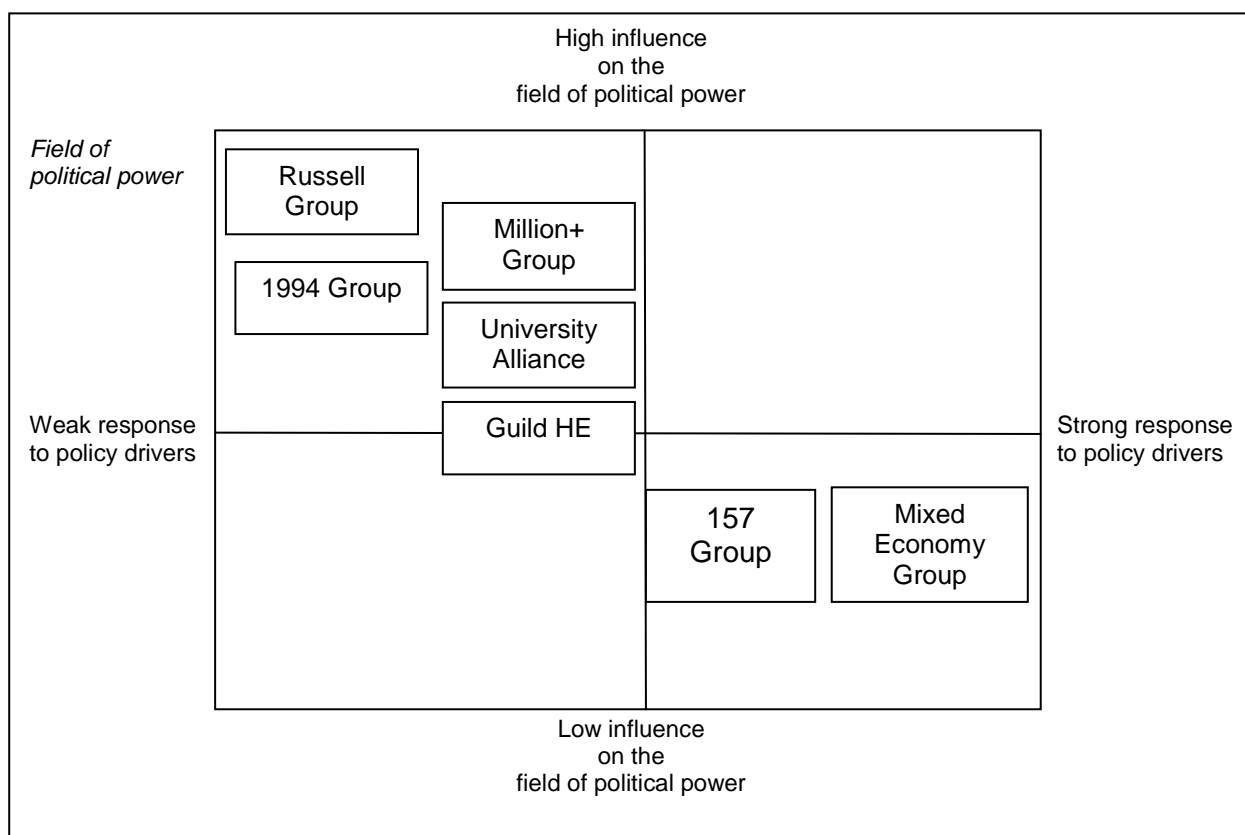


Figure 1 Location of position groups in the sub-fields of higher education based on their approach to widening participation practice

vi. Challenging the status quo

The struggle between the most elite part of the restricted field and the open field is about access to capital through membership of the field of higher education. Universities involved in large partnerships groups with FECs have also grouped together to form an interest group (Association for Collaborative Provision of Higher Education in Further Education in England 2010). Most FECs belong to a membership organization – the Association of Colleges (2011) Many also belong to one of two interest groups: the 157 Group (2010); or the Mixed Economy Group (MEG) (2010). The inconsistency of institutional naming within the field of higher education is demonstrated by the fact that the largest MEG member (an FEC)

received £8.4 million pounds of direct funding from HEFCE (King, Widdowson et al. 2008). This point is further made in the AOC response (Munro 2011) to the South-west Observatory report on Higher Education in the south-west (Crews 2011). Munro criticizes the report for containing data concerning only the restricted field of higher education in the south-west. He asserts that the report is inaccurate because it fails to mention FECs which deliver “significant amounts of HE provision”. For example, two FECs in the south-west region (in the open field) deliver significantly more HE than two members of the restricted field mentioned in the report. This is a typical challenge to the status quo by newcomers into a field which, according to Bourdieu are:

“...not disposed to enter a cycle of simple reproduction based on the recognition of the ‘old’ by the ‘young’...but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms...and expectations...[but] they cannot succeed without the help of external changes” (Bourdieu 1993 p. 57)

Bourdieu considered that the dynamics of a field were based upon the struggles between the positions taken in the field between the established positions and the new modes of practice (Bourdieu 1983). This struggle forms the background to the discussion of the widening participation practices of these groupings which is discussed further below.

vii. Ranking

The field of higher education is constantly changing and dynamic both internally to itself and externally in terms of its relationship to other fields. Internally, the taxonomy of positions is characterized by membership of position-taking groups and by the “hit parades” (Bourdieu 1988 p. 110) of league table rankings. Externally, change is characterized by discussions concerning who is included and excluded in the field, putting the field in a state of constant tension between the new and the old: characterized as the ‘avant-garde’ and the ‘consecrated’ (Grenfell and James 2004 p. 511) as the field attempts to keep its autonomy from the influence of the field of political power.

viii. Problems with Field Theory

Thomson (2008) outlines four criticisms of field theory: the issue of boundaries; the number of fields; the potential for change in a field; and, inter-field connections. Three are relevant to this study. The first issue of boundaries is one explicitly tackled by this research enquiry. I have argued that the boundary of the field of higher education is the place where the field effect of the quality assurance system ends. If an institution is covered by the supervision of the QAA, then, I argue, it is in the field of higher education irrespective of its name or field position. From this, I have identified an internal border to the field of higher education, which is based on habitus and capital deployment, in order to introduce the adaptation of restricted and open field to the field of higher education. In relation to this study, the boundary of the field of higher education and the management of the conflict surrounding it, is, at one level, the subject of this enquiry.

The second relevant criticism of field is its potential for determinism and lacking the opportunity for change. This criticism seems not to be credible in the context of considering the field as a social space which is in conflict. Conflict implies the potential for change according to Thomson. Partnership working in the field of higher education has changed the boundaries of the field, the agents in it, the players and the policy making approach. Whether partnership working was powerful enough to change the practice of institutions in the restricted field is yet to be ascertained.

Thomson's final relevant criticism of field theory is that of inter-field connectedness – that of dominant and subordinant fields. This is a complex area but if a field is a structure with agents in hierarchical positions, does not a hierarchy imply dominance and subordination? Within higher education, privileged groups consider themselves to be in a better position than other groups. If habitus and capital are included in the theory, then the analysis of position becomes possible. Naidoo (2004) makes a similar criticism of field theory as:

“excluding an analysis of social forces that are strong enough to challenge dominant forces but too weak to entirely displace such forces.” (p. 468)

Further, she criticizes field theory for failing to reveal the process by which educational principles are produced. It seems to me that this is asking too much of the field part of Bourdieu’s theory. It is the analysis of the habitus and capital which will illuminate the practice – and determine if practice is a process (i.e. more organized than just the actions of one individual), in the context of the field. However, I believe that Lifelong Learning Networks, discussed below, are an example of social forces – partnerships – which did challenge the structure of the hierarchized field of higher education, but failed to entirely overcome it.

ix. Applications of field theory to higher education

It should be stressed that this study should be placed within the wider recent tradition of scholarship that has applied the notion of field to HE, notwithstanding Bourdieu’s seminal contribution. Field theory has been deployed in relation to two relevant case study examples. The first is Maton’s (2005) study of the admissions process to a new university founded under the 1960s HE expansion policy and the response of the field of higher education to that policy. The second is the impact of university admissions policies in selected South African universities studied by Naidoo (2004). She discusses the policy which required that the high status white universities transform themselves into mass higher education institutions and their admissions strategies to subvert the policy. She concludes that:

“the higher education system acts as a ‘relay’ in that it reproduces the principles of social class under the cloak of academic neutrality. It also acts as a ‘screen’ that permits the realization of social classification in guises that allow it to be accomplished invisibly”
(Naidoo 2004 p. 460)^{xviii}

Maton (2005) deploys field theory to analyze the policy of extending access to higher education through the building of new ‘red brick’ universities following the publication of the Robbins Report (1963). He discusses how the concerns of the time were about the new student – the working class boy who might be distracted

from his study by the delights of having money and being away from home – and how these views influenced the building of the new universities as whole communities outside of towns^{xix}. Maton argues that the university system of the time refracted the desires of the field of political power to create greater numbers of university places into one about the quality of the students that might apply and the impact on learning of the assumed lower quality entrant. Thus the autonomy of universities remained largely intact despite this increase in the number of institutions. In this way, he argues, the new universities quickly became facsimiles of the old universities and thus maintained their autonomy from the influences of the field of political power. However, King observes that:

“...this relatively privileged position for universities has been hacked away at...” (King 2004 p. 18)

I now wish to propose a different reading of the field of higher education developed from Bourdieu's work on the art world that of restricted and open sub-fields.

x. Restricted and Open sub-fields

The capital accruing to a university education is of several types: economic through improved career chances; social through a larger network of contacts; cultural and symbolic through acquiring a highly rated degree. The capital accrued works at multiple levels: individual, institutional, social-class group and societal. Universities award to themselves the soubriquet of 'real' higher education and adopt varying stances towards the development of higher education in other locations such as FECs. They range from resistance, to acquiescence, to commitment. These stances are adopted despite the reality that FECs are the locations where widening participation in higher education often occurs; that a partnership between and HEI and FEC will be the foundation of such activity; and that both institutions will be covered by a single quality assurance arrangement. An adaptation of Bourdieu's field theory could provide a way forward to explain the paradox that, on

the one hand, FECs are excluded from being regarded as institutions of higher education, despite the fact that many are involved in HE; while on the other hand, HEIs accept funds to develop widening participation strategies through partnerships with FECs but fail to acknowledge the role of the FEC in that partnership. For example, FECs often initiate partnership proposals but sometimes are not credited for this; Bussell & Mulcahy's work is an exception (2009); FEC staff write curriculum and assessments which then become part of the HEI module structure without receiving any credit for this; some HEIs do not acknowledge the work of FECs on certificates given to students who may have studied for up to two years in an FEC; and, more generally there is the view that HE in FE is not 'real HE' (Fenge 2011). These points make clear some of the understandings about the relative positions of University and FECs in the field of HE. The question is one of how it is best to theorize (explain) the paradoxes and views.

Figure 2 below, sets out the initial approach which examines the division in the field of higher education into two parts: the restricted field and the open field. The restricted field contains universities and other institutions directly funded by HEFCE. This sub-field is limited by the number of institutions, the funding and the number of students. The open field contains all other institutions offering higher education, however funded. This approach proposes that the overall boundary of the field of higher education is where the field effect of the quality assurance system, common to all institutions offering HEFCE funded higher education, ends. This includes FECs in the overall field of higher education and enables the partnership relationship to be examined in that context. It also provides for a mechanism by which characteristics of each sub-field can be analyzed in the context of widening participation policy and its implementation. Figure 2 also sets out the characteristics of each sub-field: the restricted field relates to the elite universities, those that in Louise Archer's terms are 'gold'. Within this restricted sub-field, elite universities emphasize their difference from silver universities based on institutional ranking; and

completely ignore the bronze institutions by having few partnership arrangements. An example of this would be Oxbridge where the institutional capital controlled by these two institutions is based on their international standing and reputation^{xx}. These universities are concerned with differentiation from the general group of universities in England which might provide competition, and with the protection of their elite position.

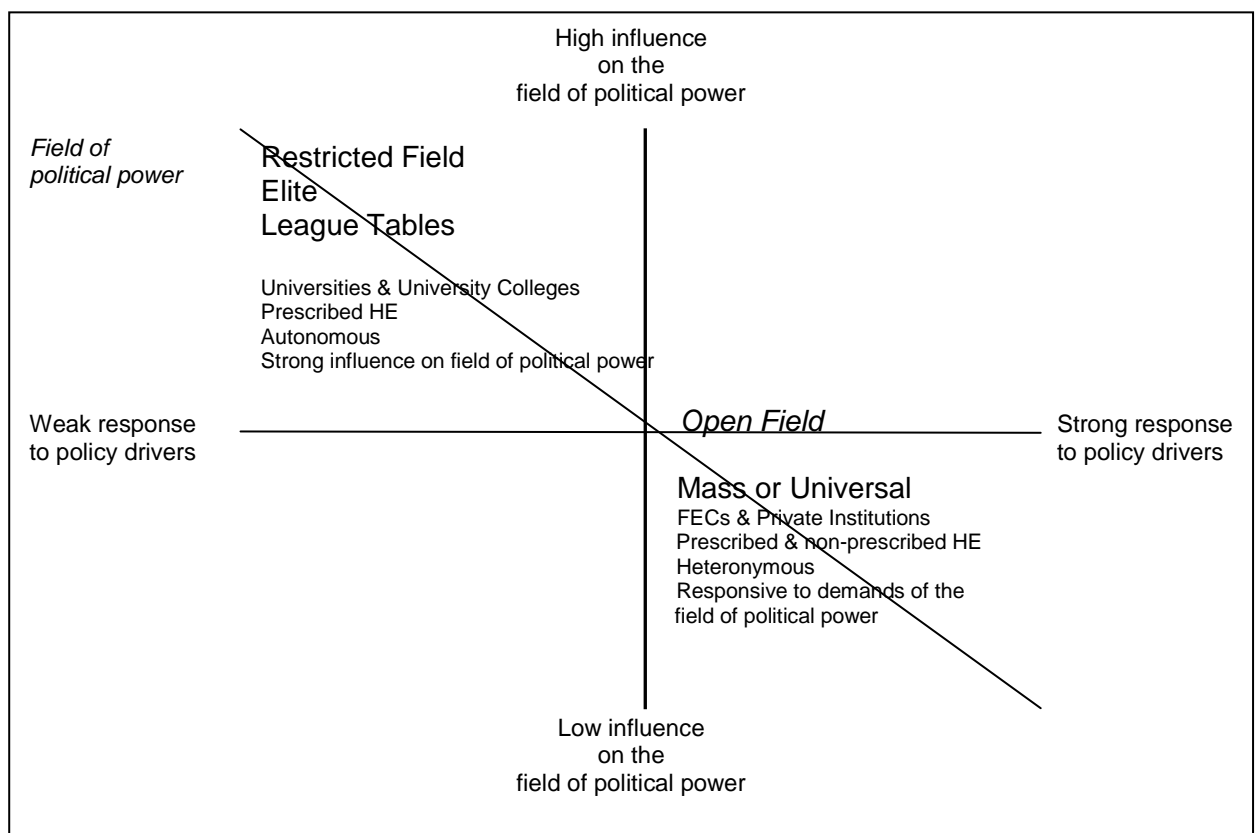


Figure 2 Characteristics of restricted and open sub-fields in the field of higher education following Bourdieu 1983

The open field occupants may be funded by HEFCE and are subject to similar QAA arrangements as HEIs but are considered to be offering mass higher education of lower quality and reputation despite any evidence to the contrary. (See Attwood 2008 for an overview)

In Figure 2 the level of autonomy an HEI enjoys is governed by the nature of its relationship with the field of political power - the government and its policies. Traditionally, universities have enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in this relationship, particularly in relation to the use of funding, whereas, FECs are very closely audited on their performance and are considered heteronomous in that they are subjected to external control. From this relationship also comes the notion of prescribed and non-prescribed HE: prescribed HE is funded by HEFCE and includes the traditional degrees and foundation degrees; non-prescribed HE is funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and includes professional qualifications in areas such as accountancy where the content is at the same level as degrees (Clark 2002).

The literature review has discussed the three elements of Bourdieu's relational theory and their deployment in research about higher education. The relational aspects of capital, habitus and field have been explored and the common sense understanding of these extended. I have introduced a adaptation to the concept of the field of higher education of restricted and open fields and described characteristics of each. The application of the theoretical model is further explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter Three

Methodology

I. Introduction

The research enquiry is concerned with seeking explanation for the incidence and impact of partnership working to widen participation in higher education in the south-west region of England. I was interested in partnerships in a strategic way, particularly in relation to policy response and implementation. The initial general plan had been to obtain a rich, thick description of two case studies of partnership working to widen participation in higher education by interviewing all the executive committee members from each partnership, managers and relevant practitioners; and, from these descriptions to theorize how these partnerships had influenced their own institutions and the policy-making process. The initial study partnerships were the South West Lifelong Learning Network (SWLLN) and the Somerset University Partnership Project (SUPP). However, a number of issues intervened in this general plan, the implications and impact of which are discussed further below. Additionally, as the literature review progressed, and the theoretical framework was developed, the nature of the enquiry was revised as it became informed by Bourdieu's approach to researching the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Lastly, unexpected issues resulting from interviewing powerful people and the ethical questions surrounding this experience needed to be considered and dealt with. Thus the research enquiry had several distinct phases and the methodology was revised as the study progressed.

This chapter is in several sections: firstly, a description of the initial scoping phase and first round of interviews including the issues which emerged and the decisions taken to deal with these; secondly, changes to the research design in the light of progress in the literature review and lack of accessibility to the personnel I had hoped to interview; thirdly, a re-theorizing of the problem to be investigated

utilizing Bourdieu's theories of capital, habitus and field; fourthly, issues relating to the question construction, data analysis, coding and construction of the case, and; finally, there is a discussion of Bourdieu's principles of research in the context of the research enquiry undertaken and evaluating my practice against them.

i. Section One – Scoping Phase

A major factor in this research enquiry is my own experience and background which is located primarily in the further education sector. As such, I look at partnership working, particularly between FE and HE from the opposite perspective to most of the current analysis which is from a university academic perspective or a higher education policy perspective. In doing so I had several preconceptions: firstly, that the funding spent on partnership working to widening participation in higher education since 1997 must have had some impact on institutions, even if the statistics are not clear; and, secondly, despite the general conclusion that the work of LLNs, for example, appears to have been patchy, partnership working, has I believe changed the way higher education operates. This was not to pre-judge the outcomes of my enquiry but rather to acknowledge that many FECs now offer HE programmes in partnership with universities and that this is hidden from the general discussions about HE provision. Given these general ideas of what I wanted to find out about and how to go about it, the challenge was to identify an appropriate theoretical framework within which to seat the enquiry. Several possible options were considered. Those with some potential included advocacy coalition theory and the policy chain approach. These are discussed further below.

ii. Initial Literature Review

The literature review commenced with reading and collating background materials on the two partnerships which would form the basis of the case study. Early readings in the literature review identified the following as triggers for thinking about partnership working. Firstly, Hatt's (Hatt, Baxter et al. 2007) assertion that Aimhigher partnership working had failed to reach the most disadvantaged learners.

Secondly, the difficulty of identifying the outcomes or benefits of partnership working which was also identified in the conclusion to Anderson (Anderson 2004) Thirdly, the national Aimhigher programme was enshrined in government policy (Department for Education and Skills 2003) but Lifelong Learning Networks were not. Fourthly, it appeared that LLNs were, in part, conceived as a potential mechanism for upwardly driven policy change (Newby 2005) and thus would be an interesting study. Fifthly, LLNs were, apparently, an initiative of HEFCE and, by its own assessments, (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2007c; Sqw 2010) could be characterized as a good idea but one which, perhaps, failed to meet its objectives. These triggers formed the basis of the initial scoping phase interviews.

iii. Considering theory

a) Advocacy Coalition Theory

My initial search for an appropriate theory to understand partnership working led me to Sabatier's (Sabatier 1988) work on Advocacy Coalition theory. This theory considers top-down and bottom-up approaches to public policy making over a period of time. Sabatier is interested in how political elites respond to changing economic and political conditions. The theoretical model has several premises: it requires a policy time span of a minimum of ten years in order to be effective; the model suggests that policy analysis is best undertaken by analyzing a policy sub-system (such as higher education) where the actors and institutions are actively concerned with a policy problem (such as widening participation); and that policy making encapsulates implicit theories which amount to belief systems based on an assumption that people enter politics at least in part to translate their beliefs into public policy (pp. 131 - 132). The theory held some promise because of the potential for upward policy influencing which I had initially understood LLNs were intended to be.

b) Policy Chain Approach

The policy chain approach concerns analyzing a policy and establishing its values and expectations for action. The policy implementation and impact is then tracked through various stages from the strategic to the operational level to gauge the difference between policy intent and practice . (See Lin 2007 for an example of this approach.) This theoretical approach was considered for use in an inverse way of tracking the bottom up influence of LLNs on policy making, and the generative processes behind the development of the SUPP project. (The SUPP project was a response to the University Challenge Fund initiative (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2009d) which asked for partnerships to make bids for funding to open new universities in so-called 'cold spots' where there was no existing provision and participation in higher education is low. Parts of the county of Somerset are 'cold spots' and so the County Council and FECs formed a partnership to make a bid which was successful but the change of government in 2010 prevented the release of funding and the project withered.

c) Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory was considered at some length as a possible theoretical framework for this study. Social capital theory has three different theoretical foundations: the civic association approach of Putnam (2000); the individual choice approach of Coleman (1994); and the power dynamics approach of Bourdieu (1986). Each was considered but Putnam was found limiting in that while it provided a framework to explain New Labour's third way approach to partnership working; it was not suitable as a way of explaining widening participation in that context (although it would have been highly relevant if the study has been solely about SUPP). Coleman's individual choice approach was not suitable for explaining both the political aspect of partnership as policy or the role of partnerships in supporting widening participation. Coleman's theory forms the basis of rational action theory which is a neo-liberal policy approach (See Becker and Hecken 2009 for a

discussion in relation to the choice between academic or vocational education.) Bourdieu's social capital approach was considered appropriate only in relation to the way he describes the generative forces behind it - field and habitus - and the dynamic approach which allowed a multi-level approach to be taken. I indicate below the point in the study at which Bourdieu's theory was selected and the impact the associated methodological approach had on the study.

iv. Initial Interview Schedule

Bearing in mind these differing theoretical models, I decided to examine the mechanics of bottom up policy influencing as a key element of the initial round of interviews. This seemed to be to be the crux of the study and would be a key influencer in the choice of theoretical model. Preparations included an analysis of relevant policy documents to identify themes. A table was constructed setting out the relevant policy in a historical and thematic matrix. An extract is set out in Appendix 11. From this analysis and the initial literature review, the first draft interview schedule was developed (see Appendix 12 for the basic schedule) which was used on a number of respondents in the scoping phase (with minor revisions or additional questions).

Originally, I defined my sample group (15 in total) as members of the Executive Board of the SWLLN. Once it became clear that this would not be possible (see below for an explanation), the sample group was extended to include similar post holders in the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN) and the Veterinary Lifelong Learning Network (VETNET). The final conference of the SWLLN (South West Lifelong Learning Network 2009f) provided the ideal opportunity to make direct contact with key players at all levels in the LLN projects in the south west region and beyond who were reflecting on the five year project achievements of the SWLLN, as well as managers of local networks (SWLLN and VETNET) and members of the strategic board of SWLLN, who were approached personally and agreed readily to participate in interviews. However, it became

apparent that senior people in the relevant HEIs were less inclined to participate, despite their initial agreement, and several reminder requests. The initial round of interviews became then limited to Lifelong Learning Network managers and some practitioners in the south-west region (SWLLN, WVLLN and VETNET); the director of the National Lifelong Learning Network (NLLN); the Regional Development Agency (RDA) official; and the first HEFCE regional official: a total of seven respondents. Purposive sampling (Punch 2005 p. 187) which had been used to select the participants in the original plan, had now reduced the number of potential respondents to seven. This was considered insufficient for the purposes of the study because of the potential for bias that all respondents were involved in LLN work. The study required input from senior staff in HEIs involved in partnership work and so the sampling approach was modified as described below.

The basic initial interview schedule was devised and a general set of questions constructed for the first round of seven interviews. A semi-structured interview approach was envisaged which would give the seven informants a general direction for the interview but would be flexible enough to allow for interpretation and development of themes and ideas. The basic questions were revised where the informant was believed to be able to offer relevant particular data. However, the overall thrust of the questions was about partnership working and its impact on the relationship between FE and HE at a personal, institutional, pan-institutional, funding body or policy level – according to the status and experience of the respondent.

v. Timing

It was at the SWLLN conference that the issue of timing became apparent. I had not grasped the time-limited nature of the LLN funding or that the LLNs were drawing to a close in 2009 – 2010 (although a few had extensions of time until 2011). The fear of losing contact with important individuals because of redundancy or other structural factors meant that the first interview with the Manager of SWLLN had to be conducted within three weeks of the SWLLN final conference. This first

interview was used as a form of test for the initial interview questions. In the event this interview schedule was used for all seven interviews (see Appendix 12).

vi. Testing Out Potential Theories

Throughout the scoping stage interviews, the issue of theory choice was prominent in my thinking. Once it became clear that none of my informants could offer any evidence of a 'bottom-up' approach to policy making through the work of LLNs and that this was confirmed in the interview with the Chair of the National LLN, the policy chain theoretical approach was dropped. A significant point in the theory selection process occurred in an interview with a representative from HEFCE which changed my thinking about the problem and how it might be approached. She suggested that LLNs had been about structural change in the higher education sector. At this point, I took the decision to change the original research design from trying to identify the mechanics of bottom up policy influencing to exploring the role of partnerships as a mechanism to change the structure of higher education. During this initial phase, the driving force for the SUPP project moved from an FEC steering group to the economic development department of Somerset County Council. The lesser involvement (and interest) of senior staff in the relevant FECs in the project meant that advocacy coalition theory was not a feasible theoretical model to adopt and it was dropped.

Having completed the scoping phase, Bourdieu's approach to researching practice through an analysis of the field, habitus and capital influenced the method and methodology and the structure of stage two of the research enquiry. The scoping phased proved to be extremely useful in clarifying the purpose and research questions and establishing the possible range of respondents.

vii. Bourdieu's Theory

Bourdieu's relational theory became the key theoretical framework which would provide a potentially fruitful explanation and greater understanding of the changes in widening participation practice in higher education through partnership

working and this was selected. Bourdieu's theoretical tools were appraised as being a suitable foundation upon which to seat the study because of their relational value. It offered the opportunity to work at multiple levels of analysis while still keeping a theoretical consistency in approach. Once the theoretical framework had been identified, the implication of it for the research methodology also needed to be considered. This is discussed below in the Stage Two section below

Following the decision to utilize Bourdieu's theoretical approach, it became clear that the method he devised for obtaining data about social practices was highly relevant to the study. Briefly, Bourdieu set out a framework for analyzing social practice as

"[(capital) (habitus)] + field = practice" (Bourdieu 1984 p. 95)

together with a three step process for analyzing the field. The model changed my approach to the study method and methodology. What had been conceived as a qualitative study based on the interview method became a study which included two broad methods. These were interviews and secondary data collation and analysis. The data collection commenced in October 2009 and was completed in August 2011.

viii. Analyzing the field

Bourdieu outlined in *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu 1988) an approach to collecting data to establish the field. The steps were to: (following Thomson 2008)

1. Analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of political power (see the discussion and figures in Chapter Two for an analysis);
2. Map out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by the agents who compete for forms of legitimate authority (see the discussion in Chapter Four for an analysis);

3. Analyze the habitus of social agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired ... and find...a definite trajectory within the field... (see the case study in Chapter Five).

When analyzing the field Bourdieu made a conscious decision to use only published resources to find the data he required because he wanted to publish the data using proper names (Bourdieu 1988 pp. 39 - 40). I adopted this approach for a similar reason so that I could cross-reference the individual universities and their position groups with their position in the field. To locate these data, I used websites, publications produced by membership organizations, publications produced by HEFCE and the LSC; government publications and documents produced by individual institutions to produce the tables. The purpose of this documentary analysis and data capture was to establish the nature of the partnership working by members of the restricted field of higher education. This was achieved by the following actions:

1. Establishing and listing all the institutions which were members of the restricted field by national membership of Universities UK (2010).
2. This membership was cross-referenced with partnership activities including Lifelong Learning Networks.
3. Identification of the members of each type of partnership using HEFCE or specific websites such as those for LLNs.
4. Using secondary resources (For example, Fraser, Orange et al. 2009) to identify partnerships which were not directly funded by HEFCE as a specific project and which are generically known as HE in FE. These partnerships are between the restricted and open field.
5. Collating the various positional groupings within the field of higher education and cross-referencing these with partnership activities.

6. In addition to the field analysis of higher education in England and partnerships above, the sub-field of the south-west region of England higher education and partnerships was also tabulated.

In addition to the analysis described above, relevant policy documents were collated and key policy changes identified. This documentary analysis has enabled charting the history of the development of policy and practice pertaining to widening participation initiatives in general (See Appendix 1). It has also illuminated the particular policy initiatives which form the basis of the case study in their broader historical context. The level of policy analysis has been a broad analysis of content in terms of the intent underpinning the policy rather than a rigorous in-depth analysis of language, values and assumptions (Codd 1988 p. 236) The documents have also provided a method of checking or supplementing the data given by informants during the interviews.

ix. Locating relevant respondents for Stage Two - Snowballing

As indicated above, the study changed direction once it became clear that the LLN project was conceived in the hope of greater structural change in the HE sector. This allowed a greater range of respondents to be included than originally conceived in the scoping stage. The first HEFCE representative interviewed suggested two or three potential informants and thus the selection of informants became more of a snowball process with each informant suggesting others who might be useful to the research enquiry. The initial HEFCE informant suggested interviewing the Vice-Chancellor of a very active LLN in the north-east which operated in a very different way from SWLLN and WVLLN. She also suggested that a former CEO of HEFCE would be amenable to interview. The remaining informants were selected for their knowledge and experience of partnership working in the south-west region. The sample was not meant to be totally representative of all possible views about LLNs and partnerships, but rather the informants were able

to talk about their own experiences of working in partnerships of differing types, in different parts of the field. The intention was to achieve a wide range of views of partnership working in various contexts and, in this way, to illuminate field theory in the selected geographical area. In reality, the respondents were primarily from the restricted field. This was because it did not prove possible to get more than four respondents from the open field. The reason for this was either because of the sudden changes in partnership status (some HEIs were withdrawing from partnerships and it was deemed too sensitive), or the retirement of experienced respondents who could no longer be located. The decision to use the south-west region as a focus for the research necessitated further interviews with respondents who were able to provide data on HE in FE partnerships. In addition, several project dissemination conferences (Herda South-West 2010) (Universities South West 2009a) were attended.

x. Identifying the Habitus - interviews

Much of the data for this part of the study was collected through interviews. This seemed appropriate in that habitus is about dispositions at an individual at institutional level. It is more difficult to judge dispositions from documents or policy in that individuals may hold a different disposition to that held by their institution or the policy intentions. The interviews revealed a common characteristic of HE academics and administrators which is their willingness to comment freely on the work of other institutions. After the scoping stage interviews, a further twenty-one interviews were carried out. In addition six other communications resulted in different responses (such as suggestions for reading or personal papers as a contribution) or no response. Post-hoc the interviewees were divided into several broad groups: those who could provide data on LLNs; those who could provide data on other partnerships in the south-west region; and those who could discuss policy. (See Appendix 14) In the event, five different former HEFCE officials were interviewed (four now in other posts – one in a relevant post to the category of

partnership working in the south-west) which may be a skew in the sample. This may have two effects on the study: firstly, an over emphasis of HEFCE intentions for the LLN project; and, secondly a tendency on the part of respondents to be less than critical of the LLNs outcomes.

The discussion about habitus was informed by the data collection process in that the areas selected for more detailed review (gift exchange, disinterestedness, trust and clientele) were generated by the responses of the interviewees. In this way the data collection influenced and was influenced by the literature review.

xi. Organizing and undertaking the interviews

A list of interview questions was provided in advance to most interviewees together with a copy of the research authorization and consent form (see Appendices 15 and 16). Each informant was interviewed only once. The interview took place either face-to-face or on the telephone. In one instance, a written response was given to the questions posed. The questions were posed and then supplementary questions posed as necessary for clarification. Where the ongoing documentary analysis or data provided from informants prompted new questions, these were asked as appropriate to subsequent respondents. This developmental approach meant that stage two respondents were not necessarily asked the same questions. Stage two respondents were contacted because it was felt that they might provide useful data about their experience of LLNs and partnership working. This experience was highly content-specific and so, in some instances, respondents had no, or very little, experience to offer which necessitated changes in questions or eliminating certain questions. In some instances the most senior staff interviewed had very little knowledge of operational issues for example.

xii. Linking interview questions to research questions

For research question one **“Has partnership in higher education been an effective way of widening participation?”**

The initial round of seven respondents in the scoping phase were asked more general questions about the partnerships as the theoretical model underpinning the study had not been selected. Having selected Bourdieu's theory, the second round of interviewees were asked some or all of the following range of questions according to their position and experience:

1. Do you think partnerships to widen participation in higher education in higher education have been successful?
2. What is your view of LLNs as part of the HEFCE strategy to support widening participation?
3. Is partnership a good way of achieving the objectives of widening participation for vocational learners?
4. What is the future for HE partnerships with FE?

It was judged that these questions were sufficiently open to elicit responses which would gain the confidence of the respondent and allow them to 'warm up' in the interview. Additionally, the questions were general enough to allow all respondents to answer in their own context. Given the sensitive nature of partnership working, these questions were considered not to be too direct and unlikely to obtain a negative response. In the event, in most interviews respondents answered these freely.

For research questions two **“Have the partnerships changed existing structures and hierarchies in the field of higher education? If so, to what effect?”**

The initial group of respondents were asked the following questions:

1. How do the LLN groups keep on task and report back to the board?
2. How do the LLN groups make contacts in the field and report back on impact? Are there issues of boundaries?
3. Has the LLN faced any issues such as:
4. Contribution of the partners (perhaps unequal);
5. Meeting targets for Additional Student Numbers (ASNs);
6. Competition;
7. Geographical issues – centre and periphery?
8. Sustainability
9. How was WP in HE represented in your own institution?
10. How did the intelligence from the LLN impact on your own institution?
11. What have been the outcomes from your own institution in relation to WP in HE?
12. Would these outcomes have been achieved without the LLN?

Questions 3 and 7 could be considered to be leading questions. Question 3 was derived from the literature review readings about the issues faced by other partnerships studied and so I decided to include them as a sub-list for the interview schedule which was sent in advance. This had the benefit of allowing the respondent to think about these issues in the context of their own experiences. For LLNs sustainability was important. The prior notice given of the questions allowed the respondent to provide in-depth responses which might not otherwise have been given. With regard to Question 7, this seems to be the crux of the LLN project and of partnerships as part of policy making. Did the LLN achieve outcomes that would not otherwise have been achieved? Each respondent gave their own view, this was not influenced by the interviewer. These questions were considered to be able to elicit how the working of the partnership may have challenged the institutional representative and their institution as they reported back.

In relation to question three **"What are the characteristics of the partners' views and practices concerning the hierarchical structure and status of the institutions within the field that were brought to the partnership arena?"**

Respondents were asked the following questions:

1. What are the impact measures that are used to evaluate the success of projects and activities?
2. LLNs are supposed to be bottom-up influencers on policy making at the national level. What are the processes you are aware of for getting items to the notice of policy makers?
3. Do you think that, in general, HEIs respond to the WP agenda in direct relationship to their rankings?
4. How do HEIs 'get away with' ignoring government policy on widening participation (or at least make it what they want it to be).
5. What are the benefits of partnership working for an HEI, for an FEC?
6. On reflection, did LLNs achieve their twin purpose (partnership and vocational pathways into HE?) - might the funding have been spent in a different way?

These questions were related to the impact of the partnership activities and to the wider influencing of policy. Each respondent was asked to think about the questions in their own context. As they responded and shared their perceptions, the interviewer could probe, seek clarification, or propose new questions. Question 2

related directly to the initial research enquiry about bottom-up policy making. This had been described as one of the key purposes of the LLN and so respondents were asked the question in a direct way. Question 3 was an attempt to identify if, for example, respondents from the Russell Group, were conscious of the impact of widening participation on their rankings. This question provided a wealth of data about the views of the respondents on the activities of institutions other than their own. Question 4 may have been leading. The literature review had indicated that many universities use their position in the field and influence in the political field to ensure that their autonomy from outside interference remains intact. The question may have been leading but it drew out strong indicators of habitus from respondents. Question 6 is a two-part question which, on reflection, is actually two separate questions.

The interview questions were considered to be able to elicit how the working of the partnership may have challenged the institutional representative and the institution as they reported back. Examples of the questions to stage two respondents indicate an approach more directly related to their personal experience. The questions were related to the impact of the partnership activities and to the wider influencing of policy. Each respondent was asked to think about the questions in their own context. As they responded and shared their perceptions, the interviewer could probe, seek clarification, or propose new questions.

xiii. Difficulties with interviews

There are drawbacks to interviews. The researcher cannot assume that what a person says during an interview will be what they say or do in all situations. Thus the reliability of the data may be affected. This could have consequences for a research enquiry which was more positivist in approach and seeking a truth. This study sought to explore a social phenomenon which by its nature is transitory. Thus the responses must be taken in that context. Secondly, the researcher may not understand the context from which the respondent speaks. For example, my own

career experience in education is outside of the restricted field of institutions. In some instances, I have had to ask for clarification of comments which might have been clear to someone with a difference experience. Thirdly, the forms of speech used by the researcher may not carry the same meanings for the respondent and vice-versa. A clear example in this study is the understanding of widening participation. Many respondents obviously held differing views about what it meant in policy and practice. One respondent was clear widening participation had been achieved and now the policy was about broadening participation (by which they apparently meant getting more people from underrepresented groups); while another considered that LLNs, for example, were about vocational progression which was nothing to do with widening participation. Fourthly, some respondents may wish to talk about other things rather than the topics being researched. In one instance, a respondent who had been recommended to me as knowledgeable about one area of partnership in the south-west, actually had very little experience and the interview agenda was guided by his agenda and not the interview schedule. Fifthly, some respondents may not be not as willing, knowledgeable or enthusiastic about engaging with the topic as the researcher desires: conversely, others may exaggerate their successes and deny or downplay their failures. In my view, the more senior respondents were either very open or very cautious in their responses. One respondent replied by email but in a fashion so terse that it was difficult to include. Requests to elucidate were not answered. Lastly, the cultural differences between the background of the respondent and the interviewee may have implications for what the respondent wants to disclose. This may have impacted on the study once the respondent knew I was from an FEC background, although this is difficult to judge. On the whole, respondents were happy to talk about their experience. In one instance, it became clear that the respondent's relevant knowledge was in the period before 1997 largely and so was less connected to LLNs and later policy work. In order to mitigate these difficulties, interviewees were

provided with questions in advance and a full record of what they had said. They were invited to amend their interview record if they wished (and several took the opportunity to make minor adjustments or add further details).

xiv. Ethics and Anonymity

Respondents were not guaranteed anonymity and none requested it. However, assurances were given about requesting further permissions prior to publication, particularly in relation to any sensitive material. In the event, it was decided to anonymize both the respondent and their institution in the case study. As many of the respondents have now retired or moved on into other posts meaning that permissions have proved difficult to obtain, the case study is as anonymized as possible given the circumstances. Institutions were coded in the case study in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

xv. Producing a qualitative case study

The focus on the LLNs in the south-west can be considered a case study. The case study in this enquiry is placed within the wider context of the field of HE described in Chapter Four. In this way the qualitative data obtained from interviews can be placed within the broader context of the field trajectory..

The use of the term 'case' is not well defined in social science, according to Ragin (1992). He states

"implicit in most notions of social scientific enquiry using case analysis is the idea that the objects of investigation are similar enough and separate enough to permit treating them as comparable instances of the same social phenomenon" (p. 1).

Using Ragin's approach (p. 3), I suggest that the case study presented is empirical in foundation and very specific to the context. According to Yin (1975 p. 371), a common problem of case studies is that the results, therefore, are not generalizable to other geographical contexts, or as a generality applicable to partnerships . The case represents an account of a particular social phenomenon that was seated in the field, habitus and capital of the partnerships which in turn refracted to the field,

habitus and capital that generated it. The case study in Chapter Five can only be seen as exploratory in nature by attempting to describe and analyze a particular social phenomenon. For the purposes of this study, the case study is designed then to illuminate the third part of Bourdieu's method by identifying the trajectory of the field.

A case study of this kind may also provide an example for researchers in similar areas to assess the strengths and weaknesses of this approach in relation to their work.

xvi. Data gathering, validation and ethics

Each respondent was interviewed once for about one hour. Most of the interviews were digitally recorded, and notes were also taken. Both the questions posed and the answers given were recorded in full. In order to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts they were fully transcribed and sent to the interviewees for checking and verification. Data from interviews was triangulated against other data sources and the information given by other respondents. Several respondents wanted some of their answers to be off the record or subject to further permission for attributable use. In one instance, the respondent wanted full control over the use of their content. In order to deal with these issues a full transcript of the interview was provided together with a consent form. Further, a promise was made that all further permission would be sought prior to using any direct quotations from individuals that had not been previously published. These actions were informed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (2011).

xvii. Approach to the Analysis

The analysis of the data is undertaken using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field. The data provided by respondents at interview was coded using a spreadsheet. Comments were coded according to the elements of Field (autonomy, influence of the political field, solidarity and symbolic violence) or Habitus (Gift exchange, disinterestedness, trust and clientele) which the interviews were

indicating were indicative of the field trajectory and which were concerned with partnership working. The coding was carried out at various levels including: comments on policy by respondents; comments on their own institutional response to policy; comments on inter-institutional partnerships; and personal comments about policy or practice. Inevitably, the interviews allowed for respondents to give their personal viewpoints which might not correspond with the policy view of their organizations.

xviii. Interviewing very senior people

Walford (1994 p. 3) claims "research[ing] up", by which he means to examine those with power in educational institutions, is a growing area giving the example of leadership studies in schools and educational policy studies at local and national level. He considers researching the powerful to be "problematic" (ibid). He lists a number of problems of which the following are pertinent to this study: firstly, that the problems of access to key informants may be intensified, particularly where the policy is controversial and that potential informants may not want to be subject to scrutiny; secondly, senior informants are well versed in controlling the information they provide which makes decoding their views more difficult; thirdly, there may be a tension between those who support and those who criticize a policy, particularly where the policy is being linked to a wider theoretical framework (such as, perhaps, the policy of fair access to widening participation); and, fourthly, the factual information gained from interviewing senior people may be less important than the knowledge gained about the context of policy-making at the highest level.

When preparing for the initial interviewing part of the research enquiry, I had assumed an element of peer relationship in that I was interviewing people in educational positions who were involved in partnerships. This proved not to be the case. I had not appreciated the potential power dynamic in the interview situation – that of interviewing up. This manifested itself in several ways in stage two. On the one hand, senior figures had promised interviews when met at conferences but

these had not subsequently materialized, despite reminders. This resistance by senior academics to participating in the research enquiry and of sharing knowledge and experience has underlined for me the potential of Bourdieu's restricted and open field concept as a mechanism for explaining the difficulties with partnership working. In this aspect, I felt like the supplicant, asking for time and expertise of others with little to offer in return (Mcdowell 1992). On the other hand, I felt an element of the dirty hands mentioned above because I became privy to information, views and attitudes that were 'off the record'. Various informants wanted to give me examples but immediately withdrew permission to use them with the comment 'but that's confidential' or 'this is not for publication'. I cannot un-know what I have been told but equally some of the material appears pertinent to my research. Cohen et al assert that material given in confidence and off the record should remain so (Cohen, Manion et al. 2007 p. 128). However, this is problematic when one informant restricts the data while another gives a similar account freely. Where an informant requested confidentiality, I have kept to this promise. However, if a similar account or example was provided by another respondent without any caveat on its use, then I have used that example.

My own social capital is also part of this enquiry. Woolcock defines social capital as: "it's not what you know, it's who you know (2001 p. 155) Social capital is generally viewed as a positive public good, but there are negatives attached to it: it has costs and benefits. Woolcock argues strongly that trust, fairness and cooperation are benefits that are nurtured by social relationships. He argues that:

"institutions without a capacity to 'give' in a responsive and accountable manner while simultaneously cultivating with "receivers" a more just, participatory and equitable social environment...will struggle to achieve their goals" (Woolcock 1998 p. 196)

Getting the social relations right is, he argues, fundamental to the successful outcome of partnership working. My failure to obtain interviews with some senior people may be construed as a failure of my social capital. Equally, it demonstrates

the disinterestedness and disinclination to 'give' on the part of some institutional representatives.

xix. Relationship between researcher and researched

As Walford (1994) observed there has been a trend to 'research up' and examine those with power in educational institutions (p 3). The research methods literature which accompanies the researching down approach has traditionally been concerned with the power dynamic between the researcher and the researched; generally assuming the power lies with the researcher. Feminist research method has long considered the power dynamic in research and research interviews; see for example, Oakley's discussion of the absurdity of the assumed one-way interview process (Oakley 1981) Reinharz's exhaustive chapter on feminist interview research asserts that:

"semi-structured interviews have become the principal way in which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data..." (Reinharz 1992 p. 18)

Methodologically, Harding's assertion that feminist inquiry insists on "studying up" (Harding 1987 p. 8) resonates with Walford's observation above, but from a different perspective. Walford's 'studying up' is about interviewing people at a very senior level in society; whereas, Harding considers studying up to be from the perspective of an underclass (women) studying itself rather than being studied by others.

Oakley asserts that qualitative research methods should be more critical and less researcher driven (Oakley 2000 p. 303) These feminist values were translated into a research practice which: included providing opportunities for those whose voice might be excluded from research studies - practitioners for example; operating in an open and transparent manner with regard to handling data and confidential data; providing opportunities for interviewees to review their data; and to provide rich detail of actual experiences in a context. It is these values that I took into the research enquiry and which I hope are evident in my practice.

Widening participation in higher education is also a value-laden area of policy and practice. As an educational practitioner who has devoted her career to helping others change their lives through improved education, and because of the recurrent policy initiatives which are concerned with social justice, it was assumed that widening participation must be considered a 'good thing'. Before commencing the field work, my frustrations when attending partnership meetings between FECs and HEIs where no real progress was made meeting after meeting, conflicted with my sense of urgency that things needed to change. Naively perhaps, I took this frustration into my first thoughts about the work of this enquiry which was encapsulated as 'partnership working to widen participation is a waste of time and effort'. This proposal reflected my experiences, values, background as driven by my beliefs about social justice. These values were beautifully summed up in the phrase used by one of my informants, a recently retired senior manager in higher education, who said "the class of '68 is retiring". By which he meant those born in 1950, who were 18 and entering university in 1968, who witnessed the student revolution in France, and drew those values into their work (and Bourdieu (1988) studied the institutional impact of this event). These were people for whom a university education was outside their class experience who wanted to act as pioneers and make it easier for those that followed. Forty-four years later, this individual is retiring and still higher education opportunities are not open for all. This speaks volumes about the ability of universities to maintain a relative status quo and preserve their autonomy from external influence despite the frequent policy attempts to widen participation. This mismatch between my personal values and the institutional responses to widening participation initiatives forms the foundation of my personal gaze and has enabled me to develop a different way of viewing the institutional practice of widening participation in higher education.

The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee was an influence on the research process. The interview process itself was iterative in that

it was built in layers as my understanding of partnership working developed through reading and interviews. In this way, I have taken my experience of the field research and selected elements from Bourdieu's theory to develop my theoretical adaptation. The field research has impacted on the way I have treated the various positions and partnerships taken by the various agents. As such then, the field enquiries have impacted on the theory and in turn the practice of partnership working which my informants were providing intelligence about, was re-constructed into the theoretical model.

II. Section Two - Evaluation of practice against Bourdieu's principles

i. Introduction

Bourdieu's studies were based on data rich surveys "...empirical, data-laden to the point of saturation" (Wacquant 1996) which were painstakingly analyzed and re-analyzed. His methodology is relational in a social space (Wacquant 1992 p. 15).

He has:

*"...jettisoned two other dichotomies ...those of structure and agency on the one hand and of micro and macro analysis on the other..."
(Wacquant 1992)*

Robbins (1998) suggests that Bourdieu's methodology was concerned with content, with integrating agency with structure (p. 29). Further, he is interested in the "generation of systems of thought" (p. 31) which organize the external world. He has, according to Grenfell and James (1998) developed a "methodological third way" (p. 2). A key element of this third way is reflexivity and the relationship of the researcher to the researched. Grenfell (2008 pp. 219 - 227) proposes a set of three "guiding principles" of a Bourdieusian approach to research. The first being "the way in which the research object is constructed"; the second, the analysis of the field; and, the third being participant objectivation. Together these form a "theory of research practice" (p. 219) which should be applied to practical research. I now wish to evaluate my own practice against these principles.

i. First Principle – the construction of the research object

Grenfell (2008 p. 220) asserts that the researcher should think about their research object from an “unexpected manner” in an effort to break from the pre-constructed. I believe that proposing to study widening participation practice in higher education from a detailed consideration of partnership working meets this requirement for being unexpected. The research exercise contains within it relational thinking which connects the event of the partnership to people, organizations, time and place, in other words to the practice of widening participation. I further recognize that this research enquiry is socially produced by my own background, education, career, and, previous job roles; the combination of which brings me to the point of wishing to research further into partnership working.

ii. Second Principle – the three-level approach to studying the field of the object of research

Grenfell (2008 p. 222) suggests that the three level approach to analysis of the field outlined by Bourdieu earlier in this chapter, provides a multi-strata approach to analyzing the interaction between habitus and field. This research enquiry has undertaken the first level of analysis of the field of higher education in relation to the field of political power (of the state), through the capture of the history of legislative and other activities and considering how these have impinged on the autonomy of the field of higher education. The second level of enquiry considers the structural topography of the field of higher education in terms of partnership working and links this to the positions held by institutions through their exercise of symbolic capital via membership of specific groups. The third level analyses the individual agents – the members of partnerships and the partnership themselves through their background, trajectory and positioning.

iii. Third principle – Participant Objectivation

This is a complex concept fundamentally concerned with truth and bias (Grenfell 2008 p. 226). Bourdieu identified three forms of bias in field knowledge:

the position of the researcher in the social space (which I have alluded to above); the orthodoxies of the field itself; and the pure gaze of the intellectual researcher, disposed to study the world rather than be part of it (p 225) (The latter is not a position I adopt for myself as a part-time research student working full-time in the open field). I understand this principle of research to provide a form of reflexivity which reminds me to constantly ensure that I am aware of how my analysis is constructed as much as the construction of that analysis itself. In effect, who I am is contained within this research as are Bourdieu's accounts of the French education system and their impact on his life.

iv. Limitations of the study in Bourdieusian terms

The limitations of this study have precluded the adoption of the three research principles at the level of depth and detail adopted by Bourdieu in his study of higher education for example (Bourdieu 1988). So far as has been practicable for a study of this purpose, I have attempted to emulate the rich data analysis undertaken by Bourdieu. Data has been collected and codified and interpreted in a way which seeks to meet Bourdieu's criteria of being relational as described by Grenfell and James (2004 p. 516). In a similar way to Grenfell & James' desire to understand definitions of learning as

"one of a series of possible socially positioned definitions...in relation to other definitions" (p. 516)

I seek to understand partnership working in a similar way. Finally, I acknowledge my interest in the study selected, how I have chosen to study it and for what purpose. In doing this I acknowledge Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity and make explicit my relation to the object of study and the bearing this may have on my mapping of the field (Wacquant 1992 pp. 37 - 46)

v. Conclusion

The methodology has been seated in a Bourdieusian approach which incorporated feminist principles and includes two types of method which were

selected as being appropriate for the study. There were: data capture through published secondary resources and interviewing. Bourdieu's requirement for the researcher to be present in the research allies with the feminist principles of research.

The documentary analysis and quantitative data capture were applied firstly to establish the field of higher education and how the field has responded to the various initiatives to promote partnership working to widen participation, and, secondly to quantify the outcomes of such initiatives. The interviews were intended to generate first-hand accounts of habitus formation and deployment in relation to partnership working, and, how this refracted back into the field and to capital formation and retention.

As with Ginsburg (1993) quoted by Fitz & Halpin (1994 p. 32), however, the method described above is “the road after it has been travelled” rather than one that was planned in detail in advance and executed. The general research strategy and intention in the context of these issues necessitated a very flexible approach and, ultimately, a change in overall direction of the research study. Originally conceived as a peer study of professional colleagues, as the study progressed the research informants were in the “researching up” category described by Walford (1994 p. 8) including very senior staff in institutions and funding agencies. Elements of the difficulties and issues described by Fitz & Halpin (1994) and Kogan (1994) were experienced and, are acknowledged. Despite the difficulties encountered in the research exercise, the material garnered has provided authoritative accounts upon which to test the theoretical framework and the specific elements of it as set out in the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Institutional Partnerships & Widening Participation

i. Introduction

The interpretation of Bourdieu's theory that I have presented above hypothesizes that there is a restricted field of universities and an open field of other institutions offering higher education in the field of higher education in England. Partnership activity between the two sub-fields is a way of managing the conflict and tensions caused by the expansion of higher education to meet the policy objectives of widening participation in higher education. From the development of Bourdieu's theory we might hypothesize that there will be hierarchy and conflict within the restricted field, while the nature of the restricted field will influence the way in which partnerships are conducted between the restricted and open fields. The restricted field contains agents who are members of Universities UK^{xxi}; the open field contains agents who are members of the Association of Colleges (AOC)^{xxii}.

ii. Typology of institutional partnership

I have noted a number of types of institutional partnerships which are features of the field of higher education, and the restricted and open sub-fields, and have formed these into a typology. This is set out below:

| Field position | Partnership description | Type and example |
|---|--|---|
| Restricted Field | Partnerships generated by universities themselves intended to protect capital - membership groups | Influencing the political field; within field membership partnerships which I have termed position groups - for example, the Russell Group. |
| Restricted Field | Partnerships generated by universities themselves to pool resources between institutions as a response to the changing funding environment | Protection partnerships - such as that between the University of Warwick and Queen Mary, University of London where academics will teach each other's undergraduates. See Shepherd (2012) for a report |
| Restricted Field to Economic field | Partnerships with enterprises to form business parks, science parks, incubator units, and other research-based partnerships. | Research partnerships - Examples such as the Bath Ventures Innovation Centre (http://www.bath.ac.uk/bathventures/forbusiness/innovationcentre.html) See Hansson for a discussion (Hansson, Husted et al. 2005) or Warwick (2009) |
| Restricted Field to Economic Field | <p>The restricted field has also partnered with the economic field in the form of company universities.</p> <p>A number of universities have partnered with business to offer degree programmes bespoke to their requirements.</p> | Skills agenda partnerships ^{xxiii} - For example, the Open University has partnered with Tesco plc to use Tesco Club card points as a way of paying for higher education courses. (Open University 2012). In 2010, the University of Bradford partnered with Morrisons plc to offer degrees through the management school; Harrods has a similar partnership with Anglia Ruskin University; GlaxoSmithKline partners with the University of Nottingham for a degree in chemistry; and, Tesco sponsors a pre-degree course in retailing in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of the Arts. (Shepherd 2010). These so-called corporate degrees were expected to proliferate following the Browne Report (2010) ^{xxiv} |
| Restricted field to Open field | Partnerships generated by universities themselves with partners in the open field for strategic purposes but with the unintended outcome of extending controlled access to field capital. | Known as HE in FE partnerships. Membership of such partnerships in the south-west region can be found in Appendix 8. |
| Mergers between the restricted and open field | A different level of partnership is the merger of universities with FECs. | A successful instance is between the University of Derby and High Peaks College in 1998 (University of Derby 2011) Merger proposals that were shelved include the University of Bradford and Bradford College amongst others (Mellors and Chambers 1996). A merger and subsequent de-merger occurred between Thames Valley University and Reading College (Garrod 2005) |
| <p>Political field funding influencing the higher education restricted and open fields</p> <p>Funding agency 'piggy backing' on policy approach</p> | <p>Funded policy partnerships between restricted and open field institutions to achieve specific goals.</p> <p>HEFCE providing funding to support initiatives which are not policy but which build upon policy approaches.</p> | <p>Short-term funded partnerships. For example, a policy objective would be to widen participation and promote fair access. These partnerships may have the intended outcome of weakening the autonomy of the field. An example would be Aimhigher.</p> <p>An example would be Lifelong Learning Networks.</p> |
| Political field funding promoting partnerships between the restricted field and the economic field | Funded policy partnerships with other fields such as the economic field intended to support higher education and the skills agenda. | Skills partnerships - such as those funded within the Higher Skills Pathfinder Projects ^{xxv} and the Economic Challenge Innovation Fund. |
| Open field partnerships | Partnerships of members in the open field intended to maximize access to capital through political influence. | Influencing the political field membership position groups - for example the Mixed Economy Group. |

Table 1 - Typology of partnerships in the field of higher education

Each type of partnership is indicative of a strategy and trajectory adopted by the funding bodies and individual universities in the restricted field which in turn illuminates their institutional practice. Partnership may be seen as a neutral activity offering greater transparency on institutional practices (Institute for Access Studies

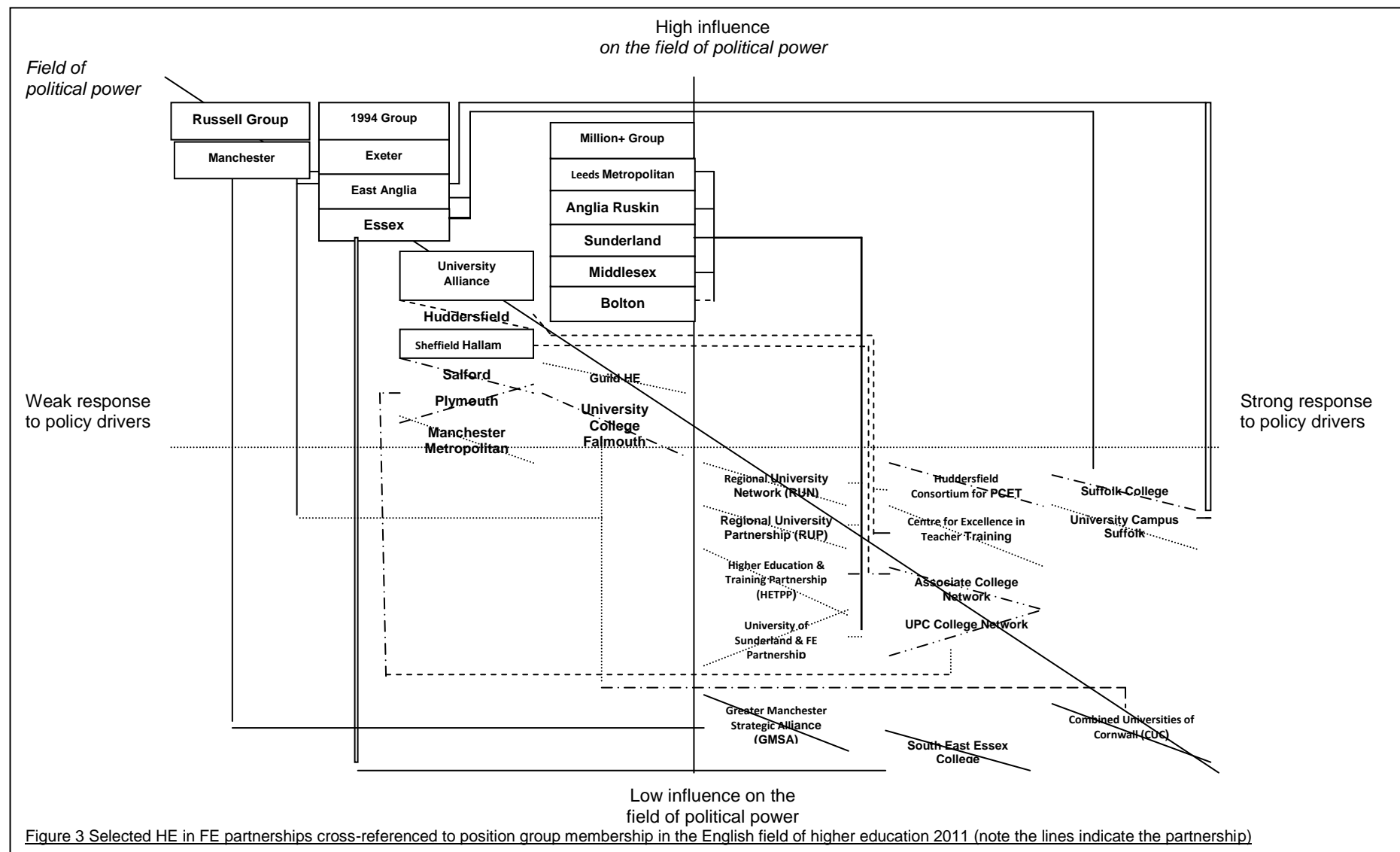
2003). However, if the hidden element of partnership is, according to Bourdieu, conflict management, this assumption must be questionable.

For the purposes of this study I wish to consider two of the partnership types in the context of widening participation practice using, where possible, examples from the south-west region of England. These are restricted field position groups, and HE in FE partnerships. The discussion of the former is to emphasize, the theoretical point made earlier, that even within the restricted field there is a hierarchy of groupings. Typically, although not always, the location of universities positions within these groupings will determine whether they are likely to form partnerships with institutions in the open field to promote widening participation. I then discuss in depth the incursion into the field of the funded partnership, the Lifelong Learning Network, which forms the background to the case study in the next chapter.

I. Partnerships within the restricted field

i. Membership Position Groups

In setting out above an overview of open and restricted sub-fields I have mentioned a number of membership groups to which universities belong. I have indicated where these position groups are located in the restricted field according to my evaluation of their potential to be influenced by the field of political power and their widening participation practice (see Figure 1). These position groups are united in protecting their access to field capital as symbolized by institutional ranking and a common mission accord. However, many members of position groups have entered into partnerships to widen participation. Figure 3 below charts a selection of these partnerships which are grouped according to the field positioning indicated in Figure 1. Each group takes a markedly different position on widening participation practice, which is influenced by the position in the restricted field. These positional groups operate a national membership (see Appendix 2 for listings)^{xxvi}.



a) The Russell Group¹⁸

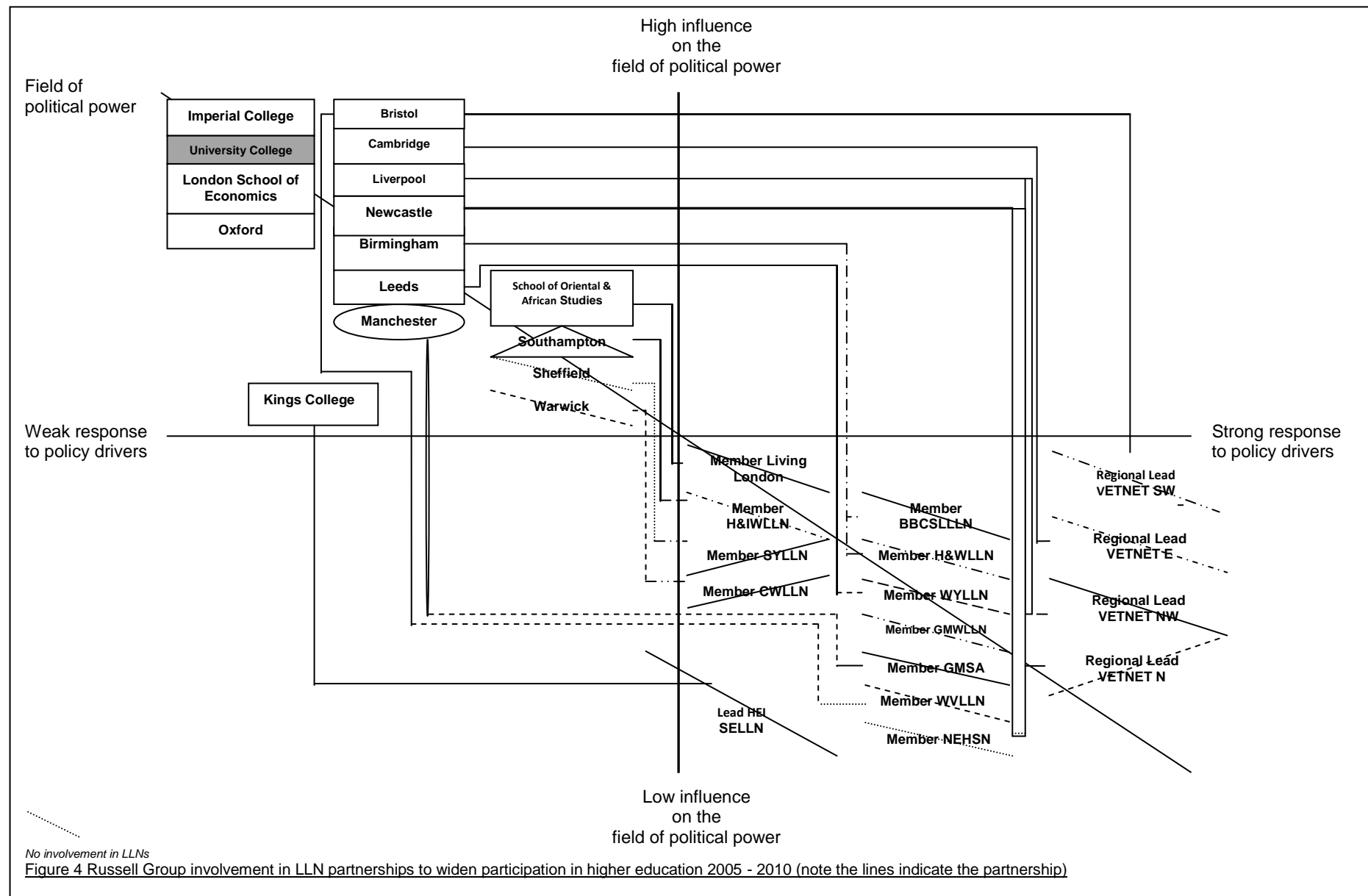
The Russell Group describes its members as:

“...20 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector.” (2010)

The group's website is full of responses to various government proposals and reports. Its stance on widening participation is unequivocal as set out in its formal response to a Sutton Trust report on university access :

“Russell Group universities are committed to attracting students with the most potential from all backgrounds, which is why we invest millions in bursaries and other initiatives designed to help the least advantaged students have the best possible chance of winning a place. Our universities will work hard to ensure that we continue to try all ways possible to attract bright students from low-income backgrounds but also to help them improve their academic achievement, which is the real cause of the problem.” (Sutton Trust 2010)

The quotation indicates the group's stance on widening participation practice as one of ensuring competition is maintained for scarce places in elite institutions^{xxvii}. This practice most closely associates with Bourdieu's original theory of capital accumulation in a class-based society. Hanssen's (2005) description of Newcastle University's (a member of the Russell Group) primary mission as being "economic development", not, as might be expected, a third mission after research and teaching, suggests that widening participation is at the periphery of the work of these institutions whose focus of interest is on research and protecting their reputation and position through accumulation of research funding. This accords with Kupfer's (2011) conclusions discussed in Chapter Two. Figure 4 charts a selection of the group's involvement with LLNs during the period 2005 - 2011. (The Russell Group partnerships in LLNs are charted as they are the least active group and thus more easily charted. The remaining positional groups are not charted as the numerous partnerships are too complicated to chart successfully. Appendices 3 - 7 table the partnerships)



In addition Appendix 3 tabulates the Russell Group's involvement in partnership working of various types (as indicated in Table 1). It is notable that four institutions including the University of Oxford appear not to have joined any partnerships for the purpose of widening participation. Using Kupfer's conclusion, this may be because these institutions considered that widening participation through open access policies would negatively affect their institutional rankings. Many Russell Group members were involved in LLNs during the project period 2005 - 2010, however, only one as a lead institution (Kings College, London ranked 13th nationally and 56th in the world (Reuters 2011)).

b) The 1994 Group^{xxviii}

The 1994 Group membership sets out to:

“promote excellence in research and teaching. To enhance student and staff experience within our universities and to set the agenda for higher education... the Group brings together nineteen internationally renowned, research-intensive universities. The Group provides a central vehicle to help members promote their common interests in higher education, respond efficiently to key policy issues, and share best methods and practice.” (2010)

With regard to widening participation in higher education, this group promotes outreach work

“The commitment of our institutions can be seen clearly through the considerable amount of resource dedicated to outreach activity, and also the number of young people who come into contact with our universities through participation in these activities... Ministers must ensure that no obligation is imposed that would hamper universities’ ability to carry out excellent, and autonomous, outreach work.” (Fuller, Harris et al. 2010).

This group is committed to a widening participation practice which works with schools and other appropriate institutions to raise aspirations. This group also emphasizes its research credentials, and views the issues relating to widening participation in higher education to be outside of the institution. However, it appears to be susceptible to funding levers to change practice inasmuch as it is the only group which alludes to the cost of widening participation activities and suggests that the funding underpinning these activities should not be restricted in any way. Appendix 4 tables the involvement of the membership in partnership working of the various types set out in Table 1. Between 2005 - 2011 almost

50% of group members were involved in a HE in FE network; 25% were lead LLN institutions; and 80% were in partnerships with business. This groups involvement is markedly different in pattern from that of the Russell Group and suggests the greater influence of the field of political power on this group .

c) The Million+ Group

The universities forming the membership of this group claim to be a think tank with the purpose of being:

“... at the forefront of the political debate about the role and contribution of universities to the economy and society”(2010)

Contrast this group’s response to the same Sutton Trust report as quoted above from the Russell Group website:

“Concentrating on access to elite universities by younger students from free school meals backgrounds is a very imperfect measure of social mobility and poor eligibility criteria for the Government’s National Scholarship Programme. Many universities recruit between 5 times and some up to 25 times more free school meal students than Oxbridge. These are the same universities which provide opportunities for older students... it is clear that the (National Scholarship Programme) NSP will result in yet another confusing postcode lottery for students. Worse still universities which currently achieve the most in terms of social mobility and have excellent track records in widening participation will lose out financially and will have no alternative but to charge higher fees for all students to deliver the match-funding that the NSP requires.” (Million+ 2010)

This group most clearly articulates the struggle in the field of higher education for access to institutional prestige and its impact on capital accumulation. This group appears open to the influence of the field of political power, through funding, but is concerned about the associated costs of widening participation. Appendix 5 tabulates the member’s involvement in partnerships according to the typology presented in Table 1. Arguably, it is the group in the most ambiguous position about what it represents in relation to responses to widening participation policy on its practice. During the LLN project period of 2005 - 2010, 60% of members were in HE in FE networks; 45% were lead partners in LLNs; 50% were partners in LLNs; and 70% were involved in partnerships with business.

d) The University Alliance

This group of universities proclaims itself to be:

“...a group of 23 major, business-focused universities. In a global, knowledge-based economy, universities are essential drivers of economic growth and wealth creation. 80% of newly created jobs require graduate-level skills and universities are helping to drive innovative, new industries that will enable growth.”(University Alliance 2010)

I could not easily find any reference to widening participation on their website. After some research the group's stance on widening participation can be found deep inside a report on institutional efficiency and partnership (Aston and Schutt 2010) which can be summarized in three points about raising aspirations and widening participation.

“Universities have long-held commitments to widening participation...[and]...in a predominantly merit-based system, universities have long understood the need to raise aspirations well before the application stage... In addition to this, the previous Government’s agenda has acted as a strong external driver of particular areas of activity.” (p 10)

This group appears to be responsive to the field of political power policy drivers in relation to widening participation practice but seats itself squarely within the globalization and skills agenda. Appendix 6 charts the group involvement in partnership working. Twenty-five per cent of the members were involved in HE in FE networks; 45% were lead partners in LLNs; and, 60% were in partnership with business during the period of the LLN project 2005 - 2010.

e) The GuildHE

The GuildHE members are mainly University Colleges^{xxix}. It is:

“... an inclusive body, a key advocate for institutional diversity across higher education and a champion for the high quality and distinctive educational provision its members offer.” (2010)

In relation to its widening participation practice, it states:

“All GuildHE members are part of the UK’s higher education provider community and subscribe to the maintenance of those same core academic values in teaching, research, subject development, knowledge transfer and support the good order of its infrastructure. GuildHE has taken its logo strapline to read “distinction and diversity”. It argues for the maintenance of a sector where small and large institutions have a place; a structure where specialists and generalists can thrive in a broader market place and in a national and international academic community. It looks to support HEIs and other HE providers that are in locations where there have been, and perhaps still are, limits on access. There is some competition between members but, with geographical and subject differences and the specific search for their

voices and brand distinctiveness, there is a greater opportunity for mutual help and support as critical friends, to share practices between members and the staff in their institutions.”(2010)

This group has a strongly values oriented approach to widening participation practice which prioritizes solidarity over competition. Of the membership of this group, 20% are involved in HE in FE networks; 20% were lead partners in LLNs, and 70% were partners in LLNs. Fifty per cent were involved in partnership with business. The membership is listed at Appendix 7. One member undertook no partnership work.

Table 2 below tables the various partnership activities of the restricted field in a comparative manner. The tables from which the data is drawn are located at Appendices 3 - 7.

| | HE in FE network | Lead LLN institution | Partner in LLN | Partnership with Business |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Russell Group | 6% | 6% | 75% | None known |
| 1994 Group | 50% | 25% | 94% | 80% |
| Million+ Group | 60% | 45% | 50% | 70% |
| University Alliance | 25% | 45% | 94% | 60% |
| GuildHE | 20% | 20% | 70% | 50% |

Table 2 Summative table of restricted field involvement in various partnership activities based on 2011 membership

ii. Restricted field position group influence on widening participation practice

Each position grouping has a clear view on widening participation which informs their institutional practice on widening participation. At one end of the continuum, the Russell Group apparently wants only the best candidates who can compete academically from a position of disadvantage with those from advantaged backgrounds. Further, they imply that it is state schooling which is failing and preventing good quality candidates from applying to their membership universities. The Russell Group is referred to as the elite group (Bbc 2012a) within the restricted field being perceived to have the greatest social capital potential for those admitted (Williams and Filippakou 2010) the most influence on the field of political power (Batteson and Ball 1995) the best resources and endowments; and the most prestige at national and international level by league table (Reuters 2011). At the other end of the continuum, the Guild HE group operates from a different position of values which align with the mission statements of their members and consequently, their widening participation practice. These values include:

*“an interest in providing a ladder of progression from FE into HE probably with a commitment to Lifelong Learning Networks, Foundation degrees...”
(Guildhe 2010)*

It is the only group to openly mention LLNs in its discussions about widening participation.

iii. Mergers and Collaborations within the restricted field

In addition to these membership groupings, the restricted field has been in a state of flux since the first expansion of university institutions in the 1960s as a result of the Robbins Report (1963). Mergers and collaborations within the restricted field have been a regular occurrence usually for financial reasons or as a result of policy change including the creation of 30 polytechnics in 1970, which in turn became universities in 1992; the transformation of Colleges of Higher Education into University Colleges; the merger of teacher training institutions into universities; and, restructuring of provision following the move from local authority control. An example of collaboration to share resources and build reputation in the south-west region is the Peninsula School of Medicine and Dentistry a collaboration between the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth^{xxx}. Much of this merger and collaborative activity is

not visible now as the assumption is of a homogenous restricted field of universities when in fact the restricted field is riven with “hierarchical tension” (Parry and Thompson 2002) derived from variations in mission between institutions. However, the restricted field is united in its conflict with the political field as the policy drivers again seek to increase institutional capacity and erode the field autonomy. The political field intends to achieve this aim through the introduction of mass higher education in the open field, which includes FECs (HE in FE now known by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) as college-based higher education), private institutions (such as the BPP University College (Bpp 2011b)), employer-based universities (corporate universities may become a threat to graduate schools in the USA) , and, schools (schools are now the preferred locations for initial teacher training) – all delivering higher education.

iv. Institutional influences on widening participation practice

The habitus or disposition towards the institutional practice of widening participation through partnership can be influenced by the leadership of the institution in the restricted field. Institutional missions and leadership change over time and impact on institutional widening participation practice. Hansson et al (2005) note the change in the Newcastle University’s mission from that in 1963 of producing:

“capable and cultivated human beings” (p. 1044)

to the mission in 2002 of:

“to be a world-class research-led educational institution and play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the north-east of England.” (p. 1044).

which has now changed to (in 2011):

“be a world-class research-intensive University [which] deliver[s] teaching and facilitate[s] learning of the highest quality [and] play[s] a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England” (2011)

It has been noted (and is discussed further in Chapter Five) that the first appointed Vice-Chancellors of universities established after 1992 (known as the ‘post-92s’) tended to strongly support widening participation through partnership to achieve growth and to meet

community values inherited from the polytechnic sector. Vice-Chancellors who were appointed subsequently, without polytechnic experience, were more inclined to position their institution as striving to be a top 10 research institution, or an enterprise university, and move away from widening participation: Plymouth University for example^{xxxi}. The movement away from individuals with a principled approach to widening participation through personal commitment and values to one of an instrumental approach to meeting the policy requirements may have had an impact on the institutional strategy and trajectory of widening participation practices. McCaig and Adnett's (2009) analysis of a sample of institutional widening participation statements submitted to OFFA concluded that:

"Pre-1992 institutions thus use WP funding to help cement their reputation as 'selecting'...[but] soften their reputation as austere, elitist institutions...post-1992 institutions ...use WP funding to increase student numbers..." (p 34)

v. Position Groups and institutional autonomy

The conflict between institutional autonomy and government policy is problematic according to Maton because in order to achieve policy outcomes the government is:

"...reliant upon the very professionals whose behaviour it intends to regulate in pursuit of policy goals" (Maton 2005 p. 700)

Gathering together in a protectionist group is no guarantee that the widening participation practices of one or all members will not be criticized for its widening participation practices. (See for example Grove 2012 who notes the poor performance of elite universities in relation to widening access.).

II. Partnerships between the restricted and open sub-fields

i. Introduction

Bourdieu discusses how the notion of institutional autonomy in the restricted field is counter-balanced by partnerships which form a

“...chain of interdependences that sews them together into this peculiar ensemble...”(Bourdieu, Clough et al. 1999)

Arguably the HE in FE partnerships are indicative of the this type of relationship.

ii. Widening access to higher education

Increasing the number of available places for higher education and the range of locations in which it is available through HEFCE funded initiatives is a continuation of the process of overt structural change in the field of higher education. Maton (Maton 2005) discusses the first stage of expansion following the Robbins Report in the 1960s. A further stage of expansion was post-1992 when institutions sought growth to achieve sufficient student numbers to achieve university status. (See Abramson 1996a for a discussion). A further round of funding for the provision of higher education in locations identified as ‘cold spots’ (Gill 2008a) was earmarked in the University Challenge (Department for Innovation Universities & Skills 2008) where 10 new universities were to be located in areas where formerly there were none. An example of this type of partnership was the Somerset University Partnership Project (SUPP) (2009b)^{xxxii}. Each wave of new entrants (new universities or university colleges) to the field of higher education brought new agents (individuals) to the field and demanded different responses from those already in it.

iii. Competition for partners in the open field

Partnerships intended to further the widening of participation in higher education can be constructed into several types which derive from the field adjustment proposed and discussed above. Partnerships between the restricted and the open field changed the autonomy of the field and enabled the field of political power to have greater influence on the field of higher education. For example, the HE in FE partnerships which originally were about growth for the post-92 type of universities and were closely controlled by the HE partner are

now being disbanded as the field of political power makes it easier for FECs to obtain their own HE student numbers. However, the finding of an appropriate institution with which to partner could be problematic because of the clienteles already being established by other universities with FECs. For example, Stennett & Ward (1996) describe how their local FECs were already in partnership with others institutions. This resulted in the then college of higher education having to search further afield to find FEC partners (p. 125/6) to establish its own clientele.

iv. HE in FE Partnerships

Some Universities have taken the partnership aspect of widening participation to a higher level and set up extensive networks of partnerships with FECs, with employers, private educational providers, and schools to deliver local higher education (See, for example Anderson 2004; Fraser, Orange et al. 2009; University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty 2009; University of Staffordshire 2011) The partnerships between Universities and FECs have become a significant feature of the landscape of higher education, and are known as Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE). Figure 3 above charts some of these relationships and indicates the relevant membership group of the university. The literature about HE in FE is divided into case studies of practice (Young 2002; Harwood and Harwood 2004; Burkill, Dyer et al. 2008); and policy guidance (Higher Education Funding Council for England 1995; Parry and Thompson 2002; Quality Assurance Agency 2006 - 7; Parry 2009; Scott 2009; Higher Education Funding Council for England 2009e). This type of partnership was classified by Bourdieu in the category of 'democratization' of university admissions (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990 p. 224) which he views as the improved chance of access to higher through an equalization of educational opportunities. These types of partnerships have become so ubiquitous that the QAA have produced a Code of Practice to govern their implementation (2010).

v. HE in FE Partnerships in the south-west region

In the south-west region, there are a number of these partnerships: the Combined Universities Cornwall (CUC) (Combined University of Cornwall 2011) is led by the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth; the Dorset, Somerset & Wiltshire Partnership led by Bournemouth University; (2011) the Wessex Partnership led by Bath Spa University (2011); the UWE Federation formed by the University of the West of England (2011); and the University of Plymouth Colleges network (2011) (the full membership of all partnerships is listed in Appendix 8) . The early HE in FE partnership described by Stennett & Ward (1996) had the then Bath College of HE (BCHE) (now Bath Spa University) wanting to grow through partnership; and Strode College (the FEC partner) as wanting to widen participation through the partnership (p 126); the reverse of the current prevailing view. The University of Plymouth Colleges partnership originated in 1989 with three partners: maritime training schools; the local college of art; and the county agricultural college. Currently, the partnership is positioned first as employer-focused, and, secondly, as for widening participation at the local and regional level (University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty 2010)

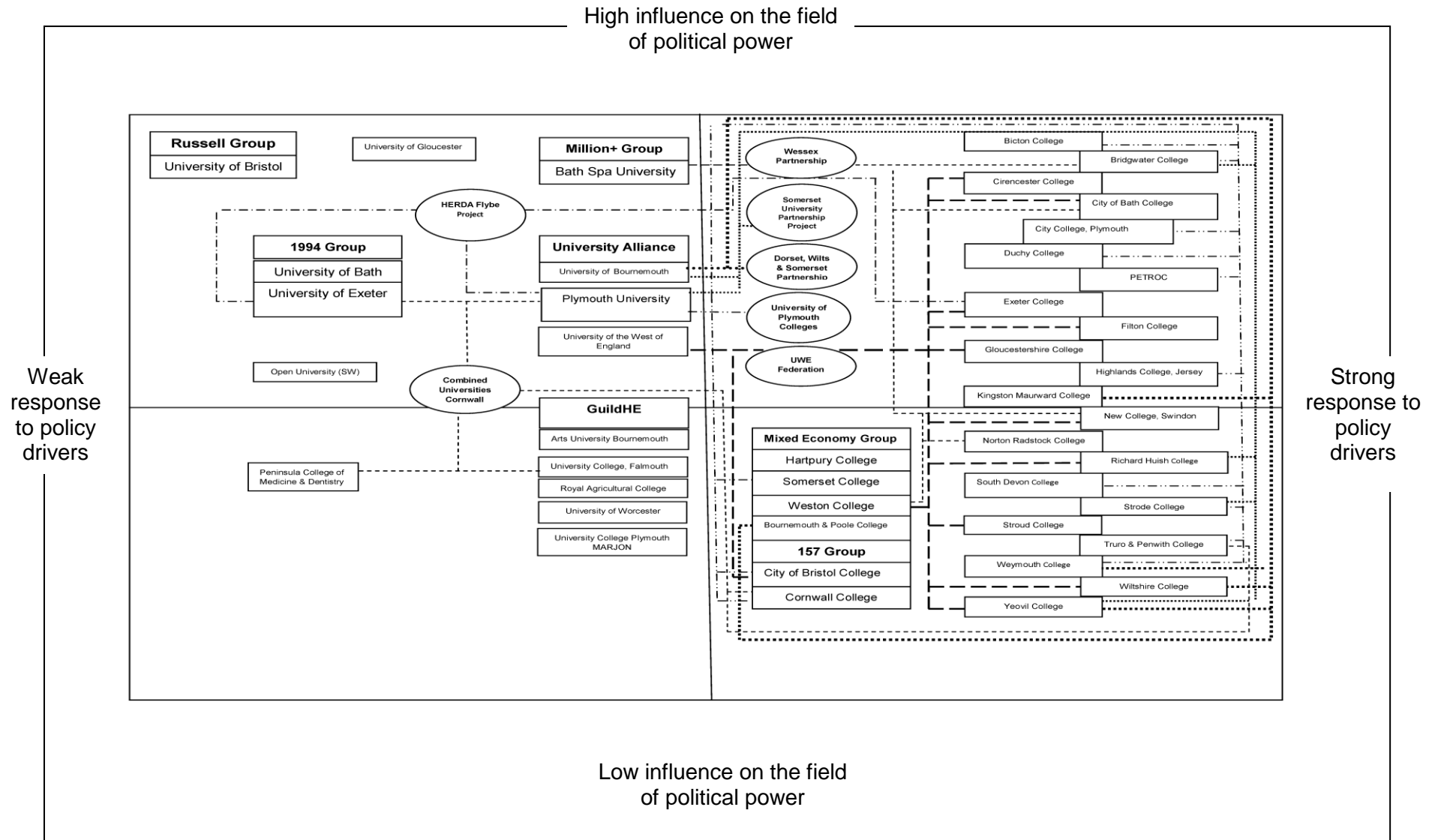


Figure 5 HE in FE partnerships in the south-west region including position group membership

vi. Consecration - or recognition by the field

A further feature of the partnerships between the open and restricted field is Bourdieu's notion of consecration. Consecration is where the more powerful partner recognizes the presence in the field of the weaker partners.

Consecration is difficult because the mere fact of the recognition gives legitimacy to the weaker partners. In many HE in FE partnerships, partners were organized into categories. For example, Plymouth University has full and associate partners (see Appendix 8) indicating the nature of the relationship between the partners. Hartpury College has Associate Faculty status with UWE and the Principal is also an Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Hartpury College 2011). This use of HE titles in an FEC indicates the close nature of the relationship. This consecration aspect is important as it mirrors the hierarchy within the restricted field and indicates something about the depth of the relationship between the two institutions.

III. Partnerships funded for policy purposes

i. Introduction

Partnership working has been a fundamental approach to the practice of widening participation in higher education as directed by policy-making strongly influenced by Putnam's (2000) civic association approach to social capital theory. According to Law and Mooney (2006)

"Tony Blair eulogized Putnam's ... conception of social capital in almost identical terms in his vision of the good community: "As Robert Putnam argues communities that are inter-connected are healthier communities. If we play football together, run parent-teacher associations together, sing in choirs or learn to paint together, we are less likely to want to cause harm to each other. Such inter-connected communities have lower crime, better education results, better care of the vulnerable."

The Labour government administrations of 1997 – 2010 were committed to devolved, regional partnerships of different types in order to achieve policy goals. This 'Third Way' of collaborative discourses and social capital theory saw partnerships as benevolent (Cardini 2006 p. 394) Further, Cardini argues that partnerships were seen as:

"necessary, innovative, pragmatic and neutral approach to policy making [which] emphasizes co-operation and trust and hides the complex struggles for power that take place in working partnerships...struggles for power and recognition" (Cardini 2006 p. 410)

But also as

"subtle forms of central control [where] central government determines the rules of the game" (Cardini 2006 p. 408)

Time-limited partnerships such as LLNs were viewed as ways of overcoming the competition, bureaucracy, distrust, antagonism, monopolies and stiffness of the hierarchical fields (Cardini 2006 p. 394). The influence of North American higher education systems and approaches is a recurring theme in the ways that the political field have promoted partnerships as a way to change the habitus of the restricted field of higher education. These influences are discussed further in the relevant sections below.

ii. Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs)

In my view, LLNs were intended to respect the autonomy of universities while encouraging them to work more closely with other universities and with FECs for the benefit of vocational students. However, some universities saw them as more of a threat to institutional autonomy. According to Watson:

“Lifelong Learning Networks involved a sense of HEFCE trying to steer the likely course of encouraging diversity; while at the same time allowing universities to maintain selectivity.” (Watson 2009 p. 3)

This is a much clearer example of using government policy funding to steer changes in habitus and practice of individual universities. LLNs were a specific partnership initiative to overcome admissions barriers to accessing higher education for vocational learners and thus achieve greater social justice for individuals who traditionally did not attend (Newby 2005). The project was a response to the view that vocational learning is considered ‘second rate’; and, those following vocational programmes at level 3 (below HE level) were considered by the restricted field of higher education to be intending to seek employment not further their education, despite the field of political power stating that universities should be training students for jobs (Warwicker 2011). The so-called “status hierarchy of qualifications” (Wolf 2002 p. 111) limited the university level options for these learners. LLNs were intended to allow institutions to:

“...pay greater attention to how we can encourage institutions, both FECs and HEIs to connect to each other, creating the sense of seamless progression along clearly sign-posted pathways” (Newby 2005)

Initially a HEFCE pilot project which was enthusiastically supported by the government, LLNs grew to number 31 networks and a National Lifelong Learning Network (NLLN).

LLNs derive from and encapsulate a number of strands of practice and thought about higher education in England . These include: lifelong learning^{xxxiii}, planned, mission specific higher education derived from the USA including the

Wisconsin model; and, the American model of tertiary learning; and credit accumulation and transfer systems. The most relevant of these to this study is the desire to plan progression to higher education known as the Wisconsin model.

iii. The Wisconsin Model

A significant influence on the LLN project was the Wisconsin model of planned higher education in the United States, also seen in California and Florida. Although the Wisconsin model pre-dates Putnam's work on civic association, it is clearly within this paradigm as all institutions offering higher education in the state of Wisconsin confederate to ensure that everyone has local access to higher education opportunities (Utley and Fine 2001). Additionally, the educational institutions are mission specific ranging from community colleges which offer the first two years of a higher education programme, to undergraduate teaching Universities which offer the final two years of the Bachelor degree. Students can then progress to world-class research institutions for Masters or Doctoral studies. This model has been influential in English higher education, an early example being the regional access consortia which all universities were encouraged to form or join (Abramson 1996a). The Wisconsin model also informed the implementation of LLNs, and is acknowledged by the University of Plymouth Colleges (2010 p. 23) as an influence on the development of their FE partner network. In Chapter Five I indicate that the response to this element of the LLN policy initiative was variable. In general terms, English universities do not like the American model of education and have avoided its implementation^{xxxiv}. The proposal of a single field of higher education albeit structured into two parts supports the view that steps have been taken to develop the tertiary model. For planned progression between further and higher education, a credit system (similar to the North American model) would also be required. This has been partly implemented in

English higher education^{xxxv}. Access arrangements and admissions to higher education continue to be a theme of the higher education landscape that is about structural change and changing attitudes towards learning. The Credit Accumulation & Transfer System (CATS) system was an example of an attempt to make the restricted field views its own practices and revise them to facilitate the greatest access to learning. It was also an example of where a national initiative has had an impact (curriculum is now modular and has credits), but the change element of the initiative (accumulation and transfer) has only been implemented in limited ways, such as in Access programmes. Following Maton's (2005) approach, the restricted field has refracted this initiative into the admissions area including work-based learning arena thus restricting any interference with research and teaching. The failure of the partnership inherent in the transfer part of the CATS system belies the English university mantra that all degrees are the same. Lifelong Learning Networks attempted to overcome the transfer restrictions within the field of higher education by developing the concept of a guaranteed place for vocational learners. This has not proved to be possible (even where LLNs has their own additional student numbers (ASNs) - the acronym used to describe the additional higher education places given the LLNs). The best that could be achieved was guaranteed interviews for vocational learners.

iv. Criticism of Lifelong Learning Networks

Critiques of Lifelong Learning Networks are few but include Ward (2009 p. 3) who observed:

"The embedding of the work of LLNs within institutions and regions will produce a significant legacy. However it is a legacy which will need nurturing if it is to have long-term impact. There are financial implications, there needs to be a shared commitment from partner institutions towards this cultural and operational approach. There is evidence of this, but a reluctance or inability to fund the work from existing budgets. The LLNs have stimulated innovation and forged change, it would be extremely disappointing if the vision of Sir Howard Newby were lost"

As we will see, it is questionable whether the vision remains and, if the work of the LLNs was embedded. This is despite the huge amount of effort put into the projects by HEFCE and the LLNs themselves. The policy aspects of LLNs are discussed further below. The activities of the restricted field positional groups in relation to Lifelong Learning Networks are charted at Appendix 9. A table of LLN members in the south-west region is at Appendix 10.

v. The institutional practice of widening participation and LLNs

The purpose of LLNs was to overcome barriers to access higher education for vocational learners. Jones viewed them as “intended to fit end-on to Aimhigher” (Jones 2005 p. 5). However, HEFCE could not impose the project on the universities (because it has no planning function for higher education in England) and had to adopt an “enabling, non-prescriptive approach” (Sqw 2010 p. ii). As a consequence, HEFCE *invited* (my emphasis) the HE sector to participate (Higher Education Funding Council for England 2004). The approach adopted by HEFCE was quite different from that adopted with previous projects. Instead of being very prescriptive HEFCE encouraged bottom up, open approaches with little prescription except that any proposal must include a research-intensive university, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), and regional agencies. Each partnership had to produce a business plan which was approved by HEFCE for implementation. The mantra for LLNs adopted by the end of the project was to ensure the coherence, clarity and certainty of vocational progression opportunities for learning into and through HE (Sqw 2010) but this was the result of the implementation, not the clearly defined goal as the outset. LLNs also, arguably, challenged the field structure, particularly in relation to competition between institutions and institutional autonomy.

Several of the LLNs were built on existing partnerships. For example, the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (GMSA) used LLN funding to further develop an existing partnership supporting a proposal to form a single community

college in Manchester. This partnership involved a number of universities, FECs, and, other institutions. The competition for LLN funding was put aside according to Blackie (Blackie 2005 pp. 203 - 209). Jones saw the LLN initiative as recognizing the autonomy of institutions while encouraging diversity (Jones 2005 p. 5) The summative evaluation of LLNs commented that

"This approach recognized the autonomy of the individual institutions..." (Sqw 2010).

vi. LLN Partnerships in the south-west region

There were three types of LLN in the south-west region. The national LLN (NLLN) was active in the region (National Lifelong Learning Network nd). There were two national subject LLNs with regional activities in the south-west. These were the regional Veterinary network (VETNET) (2011); and, the regional activities of the National Lifelong Learning Network for art (Ukadia 2012). Figure 6 charts one example of the complexity of the partnerships . The chart sets out the members of the restricted field in the partnership together with their mechanism of operation (such as the Executive Board). The partner FECs in the open field are then charted. The position of the lead institution for the network (such as the University of Bristol in figure 6) reflects the field position of the institution in relation to widening participation practice described in Chapter Two.

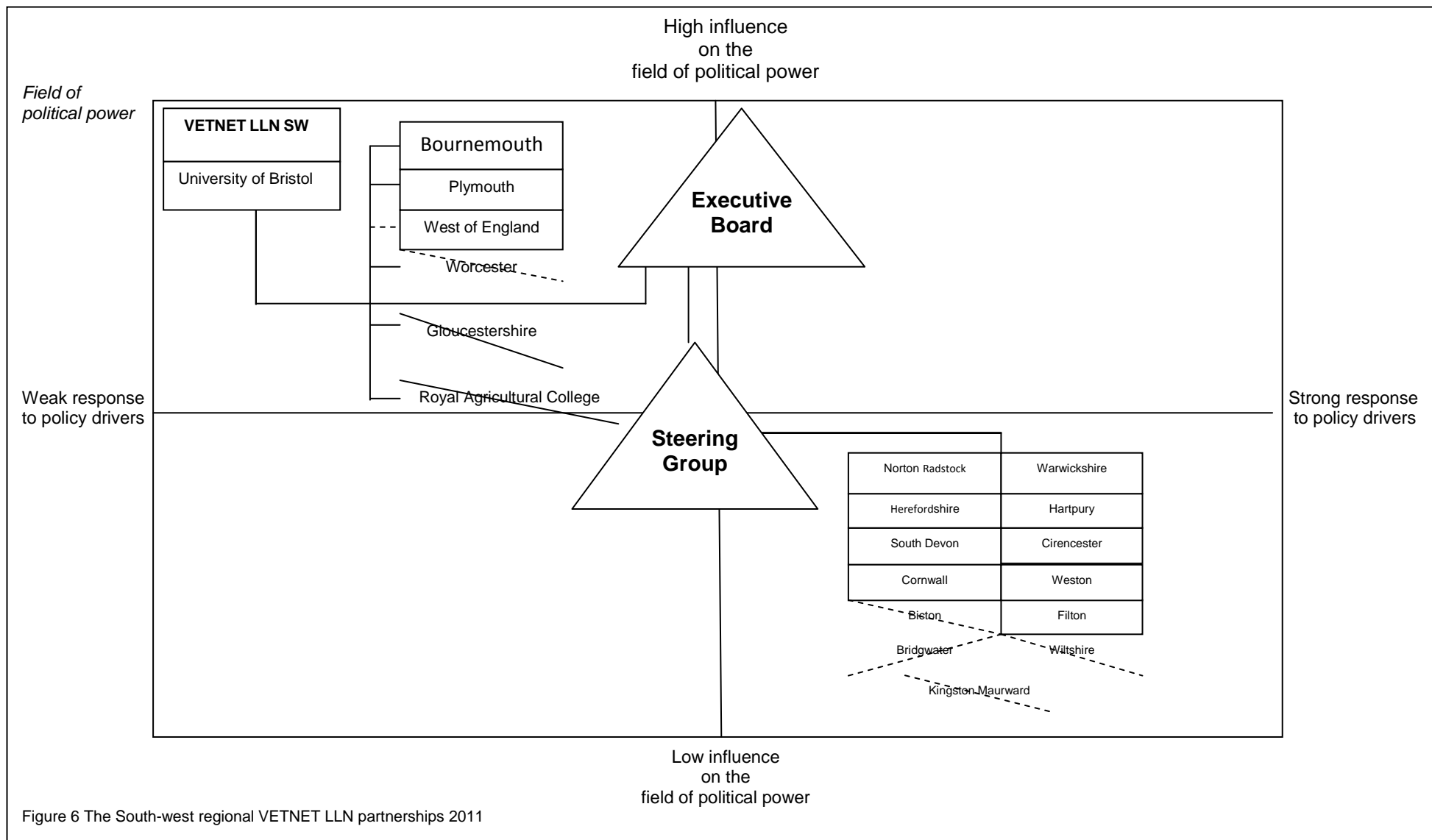


Figure 6 The South-west regional VETNET LLN partnerships 2011

There were two sub-regional networks: the South West Lifelong Learning Network (2004) based on the geographic boundaries of the relevant Aimhigher partnerships; and the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network 2011) which was formed from a previous partnership between several of the university partners

The long term impact of the LLN project in meeting the objectives of overcoming barriers to access for vocational learners is equivocal. Little asserts that “LLNs were effectively ignored by the academic community” (Little 2009 p. 13), while Blackie observes that “LLNs were not core business” (Blackie 2005 p. 210), and Jones questions their impact on the autonomy of institutions.

“LLNs might limit institutional autonomy which some partners might find unacceptable” (Jones 2005 p. 5)

While the intention might have been to change the structure of the field and offer “seamless progression” to higher education for vocational learners (Sqw 2010 p. ii), Maton’s assertion that the

“primary aim of a university is emphatically not vocational” (Maton 2005 p. 693)

indicates, perhaps a doxic (traditional unquestioned) attitude to vocational qualifications as being unsuitable for entry to university by the restricted field, which may have influenced the response to the LLN initiative. This view is confirmed by the formal evaluation for HEFCE of the initiative. It concluded that LLN activity was subsumed into general activity to widen participation within the institution (Sqw 2010 p. vii). This confirms Watson’s view that LLNs were a “parallel play” (Watson 2005 p. 87). The summative review of LLNs asserts that LLNs did act as a:

“conduit for change...[were] more impartial than individual institutions....[and] involved employers and Aimhigher...cross-LLN developments were significant” (Sqw 2010 p. vi)

However, King, Widdowson and Brown assert that:

“...qualifications have not changed...expansion did not break the mould” (King, Widdowson et al. 2008 p. 6)

The Universities UK survey reports that their membership viewed LLNs as making

“a significant contribution in terms of information, advice and guidance”
(2007)

indicating that the restricted field has perhaps, once again, managed to refract the attention away from its own institutional practice of widening participation to a focus on the work of those at the pre-admissions stage.

Lifelong Learning Networks, then, were an initiative intended to at least prompt partnerships to work strategically together to overcome barriers to accessing higher education and thus to promote social justice. Their design was deliberately left to local needs. It was hoped that participants in the partnership could achieve elements of structural change to achieve seamless progression. The influences for these structural changes were indicated as being along the lines of the North American model of education. LLNs are an example of a field disruption which proved too weak to challenge the prevailing hierarchy. The question then is why?

IV. Institutional practice of widening participation

i. History of widening participation through partnership in the south-west

In this section background is given to partnerships in the south-west region of England by way of preparation for the qualitative study reported in the next chapter. The first funding initiative for widening participation that I could locate (in the south-west region) was a special funding programme funded by HEFCE (1998). The restricted field agreed, following steering by HEFCE, to use the funding to produce reports on widening participation in urban and rural areas in the south-west region (Haselgrove 1999). This represents the first formal intervention by HEFCE as an agency of the field of political power to direct the institutional practice of the restricted field. A key conclusion of the report on rural issues was that the research projects provided

“the process by which individual HEIs have learned to work together; a process that they are now extending to FE partners” (Haselgrove 1999 p. 28)

It is from this historical collaboration that the complex web of partnerships which I have sketched out above derives.

ii. Case Studies of widening participation practice in two south-west universities

In their comparison of the ‘mainstreaming’ of widening participation in two universities in Bristol, Hoare et al, note:

“[that the] takes on WP by different universities inevitably reflect the types of institutions that they are and aim to be, but successful WP practices and policy embedding is not the prerogative of any particular university type” (Hoare, Bowerman et al. 2011 p. i)

Hoare et al., discuss the different histories of the two universities, one in the Russell Group (the University of Bristol (UoB)), and the other in the University Alliance (the University of the West of England (UWE)). Both have a university-wide WP strategy and a dedicated unit tasked with leading and managing its delivery – the UoB office having been established in 2000 (p. 321). As discussed above in relation to the collaboration practices of the restricted field to minimize competition, the UoB and the UWE offer a joint programme of local outreach through the Aimhigher programme (p. 323). Hoare et al., credit UWE with a steady

increase in the diversity of its intake since 1999 with greater numbers of student bursaries being distributed; they conclude that the UoB has been less successful. They state that UWE has been more involved in local and regional outreach work including its federation with FECs (the UWE Federation); whereas the UoB operates on a national level with the Sutton Trust (Sutton Trust 2010), and through a national WP forum for Russell Group members rather than regional consortia (p. 324). More importantly, the UoB is a “selecting” institution which attracts a higher number of applications-per-place and according to the UK university league tables “*it does not need more high quality applications*” (p. 325) whereas UWE is a “recruiting” university which depends more on local recruitment and teaching-related income (p. 325). Hoare et al., conclude that the two universities have:

“...recognized their differences and played to their strengths, to the benefit of their WP agendas. Finally, their collaborations here provide the chance to share experiences....in ways that otherwise would not have been glimpsed...” (p. 326).

While their paper recognizes the activities undertaken within the universities, and acknowledges UWE’s federation of partner FECs, no mention is made of Lifelong Learning Networks, for example, where the University of Bristol was the regional lead for VETNET and involved in the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN) in which UWE was also a partner. This is a puzzling omission but is supported by a point already made by Michael & Balraj who state that it is:

“common for academic administrators and teachers in the same institution not to be aware of collaborations...outside their interest” (Michael and Balraj 2003 p. 132).

King puts this more strongly:

“[academics] antipathy to the executive assumptions of Vice-Chancellors” (2004 p. 1)

iii. Conclusion

Chapter Four has developed Bourdieu’s theory of field and the adaptation of the restricted and open field into the analysis of the types of partnership working to widen participation in higher education. Partnerships have been described and characterized in

the context of the theoretical model and their provenance is traced. Additionally, the policy of partnership working has been revealed and their outcomes related to the theoretical model. The responses of the restricted field to widening participation through partnership working has been charted empirically in the figures and appendices and reflected in the discussion to explicate the relational theory of field, habitus and capital in action in this context.

Selected partnerships have been considered in more depth. The outcomes of each type of partnership have been influenced by the position in the field of the partners. Partnerships between the restricted and the open fields have promoted a controlled form of access to the field capital through the establishment by universities of a clientele of FEC partners under their control. Through the analysis of the field positions, the institutional practice of widening participation has been discussed and related to partnership working. The application of the open and restricted field concept to higher education has enabled all of the institutions offering higher education to be considered together and their approaches to partnership working considered in relation to their field position. This avoids the dualism of the HE in FE construct and allows the partnerships to be seen as a relational phenomenon worthy of examination. Chapter Five gives rich detail to some of the issues discussed through illuminating further the work of the LLNs in the south-west and their relationship to the open and restricted fields.

Chapter Five

Case Study

i. Introduction

The case study is concerned with illuminating the trajectory of the field of higher education in the south-west of England and its response to the incursion of a HEFCE-funded initiative to form Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs). The overt purpose of the initiative was to improve the access and admissions prospects of young people who had studied a vocational route at level 3 rather than the traditional route of academic A Levels. The covert (in that HEFCE has no planning function), hoped for outcome on the part of HEFCE, was a more planned approach to the transition from level 3 to level 4 learning through partnerships between FECs and HEIs. A respondent who formerly worked for HEFCE noted in his interview that:

"LLNs could be seen as a way of testing out the sector to see if there was any desire for planned, systematic change through the development of a progression framework"

The case study is in several parts: an overview of the field of higher education in the south-west region; a brief review of the field trajectory between 1992 - 2005; an examination of the field positions in 2005 and how these were demonstrated through the response to the LLN project; illumination of the dispositions (the habitus) of individual agents directly involved in partnership work; the impact of field positions on the admissions practices as determined by the partnership actors as outcomes of the LLN activity; and the changing nature of the response to policy drivers through funding on practice.

ii. An overview of the restricted field of higher education in the south-west region of England

The restricted field of higher education in the south-west region of England can be described as a 'necklace' as the location of the institutions is on the edges of the region leaving large areas of the middle of the region empty of university-based higher education

provision. Figure 7 below displays the configuration. The region is large and its boundaries for the purposes of higher education include the counties of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The region is divided into two parts; the east area of the counties to the Devon border, and the west region comprising the counties of Devon and Cornwall. The county of Cornwall attracts European Union funding as an area of social deprivation. This funding has been important in the development of higher education provision in the County^{xxxvi}. As noted previously, the counties of Somerset and Wiltshire have no university.

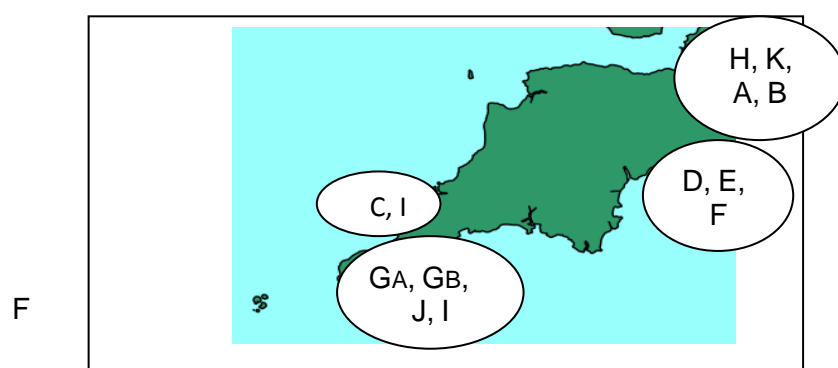


Figure 7: Map of the restricted field of higher education in the south-west with case designators (see Appendix 18)

The field positions of the 13 institutions in the restricted field as denoted by membership of Universities UK in the south-west would, generally appear to reflect the national classifications^{xxxvii}. The types of institution includes: one traditional university (founded in the nineteenth century) which is a member of the Russell Group; one traditional and one red brick (founded in the 1960s) university which are members of the 1994 Group^{xxxviii}; four post-1992 universities (previously polytechnics or colleges of higher education), of which three are members of the University Alliance, and one of the Million+ Group; and, five universities or university colleges given degree awarding powers since 2000; four of which are members of the GuildHE and one is not aligned to any group. One institution, Dartington College of Arts has recently merged with University College, Falmouth. The full range of field positions towards widening participation, by membership of position groups, is represented in the south-west (see Appendix 17). The position of the GuildHE may be over-presented but the institutions are smaller and specialist which impacts on their influence and field position.

iii. Field positioning 1992 - 2005

In 1992, the field of higher education in the south-west was extended. Universities A (red brick), C and F (traditional), were joined by former polytechnics now named university (B, D, I and L) - the post-92s^{xxxix}. Each of the post-92s appointed their first Vice-Chancellor from the polytechnic sector who kept the old polytechnic values of community and access as elements of the strategy for the new universities.

"...there were quite a group of us that believed in social inclusion...it's a generational thing..." (respondent B)

None of these new Universities had strong strategies for developing research (although this was undertaken), they were overtly and covertly establishing their position in the field through strategies for growth through expanding student numbers. One element of this strategy was through partnership with FECs; another the admissions of fees-only students^{xl}. Each of the post-92s sought out FECs to partner with (see Appendix 8). These early partnerships met with mixed success. For example, University B found it hard to get sufficient student numbers from some partner colleges; and, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) of University L reported that it withdrew from all partnership activity following a critical QAA report. This short-notice withdrawal from partnership activities with FECs appears to be a regular response to changing policy. However, University I established a large FEC college network^{xli}, influenced by the American community college model of locally delivered higher education linked to a state university.

Each post-92 University was very much in competition with the others (and the established institutions) to ensure survival. Partnerships between universities were difficult to establish (except where significant external funding was available such as in Cornwall). Despite this collaboration, a respondent commented that:

"competition between universities was often intense...it was real warfare between some institutions" (Respondent C)

University B entered into their HE in FE partnerships with a:

"genuine interest in FECs...we had a view...that we had stuff to learn from them, particularly about teaching styles and strategies for student retention" (Respondent B)

at the same time, however, he viewed the partnerships as:

"historically the relationship has, at times, been opportunistic. But I don't think you can lay that just on the HEIs. I think it suited the FEs too...it takes two to tango...a new model of partnership [is needed] which is capable of sustaining some of the vagaries of changes in funding policy" (Respondent B)

FECs involved in HE in FE partnerships had a different perspective on the partnerships with HE.

"if I was cynical, I would say [HEIs] get a vehicle to do things they can't do themselves...access to communities...to facilities...to resources...if I was being generous...they learn a lot about teaching and learning from partnership working" (Respondent D)

The former Deputy Principal at an FEC comments:

"it was an interesting experiment because a university in a college setting was a very difficult one to get around..."

He recognized the partner university's strategic plan for growth was being achieved through the partnership.

"you had a new vocational university...which clearly saw the need to expand" (Respondent E)

The issue of power and control and the changes in strategic direction of the HEIs were problematic:

"You usually find in HE in FE partnerships that universities don't like giving up control" (Respondent D)

and

"partnerships are influenced by the strategic direction of the university...which lurch from one extreme to the other (Respondent D)

The differing cultures between HE and FE resulted in difficulties in communicating:

"[HEIs] treat colleges like a petulant child...it is rare to have adult conversations...[FE] is always a servant for them..." (Respondent D)

In relation to widening participation, one post-92 institution described itself as:

"...proud to be predominantly an institution focused on making a difference to society and we believe we do that best by educating as diverse a group of students as we can. I don't think a lot of people see it like that..." (Respondent F)

However, this was not always the case, following the change of VC at another university the emphasis moved away from widening participation:

"University X had a change of VC and the emphasis is now on profile and moving up the league tables...they felt that widening participation had been given too high a priority" (Respondent G)

The Dearing Report and the change of government in 1997 brought with them a clear direction of travel for universities. HEFCE regional consultant B recounts how the first meeting of all the institutions in the south-west region took place in Taunton under the chair of the Vice-Chancellor at university L. Despite the previous lack of co-operation, all HEIs in the region were persuaded to collaborate in a funding bid for research into widening participation. However, the responses varied from the enthusiastic to the cool. The potential responses to the influence of the political field, and any associated funding, by each individual institution are encapsulated in the following comments:

"....one of the things we were proud of is that if we were getting public funding...and the purposes were a, b and c. We would do our damndest to deliver...(Respondent B)

in contrast to:

"the influence of...policy through financial levers is pretty small in this institution (Respondent F)

These comments indicate the spectrum of responses to policy funding initiatives and may partly account for the variance in widening participation activities.

The Aimhigher partnership (and its precursors) had been well received in the south-west region. All universities had embraced the requirement to partner with schools to raise

the aspirations of young people towards university. Three sub-regional partnerships had been formed. The regional manager was based at university L and was proud of the collaboration between universities that the partnerships had achieved. She comments that:

"...between 2000 - 2002, HEFCE looked to the south-west for best practice on widening participation partnerships. We were seen as the leaders because we had gone further than anyone else" (Respondent H)

The new curriculum of the Foundation Degree (FD) and the exhortation to deliver these in partnership with FECs was received in various ways by the institutions in the field. For example: University C (traditional, Russell Group) has no Foundation Degrees and no HE in FE partnerships with FECs; University I (post-92, University Alliance) was an enthusiastic adopter of Foundation Degree and transferred all their equivalent precursor qualifications from the main campus to the FEC partner network. It took a strategic decision not to offer Foundation Degrees except through partner colleges; University F has validated Foundation Degrees in highly specialist areas only where they have curriculum expertise and a market. Reflecting on the impact of Foundation Degrees on their institution, a retired manager stated:

"Foundation Degrees have been a greater spur for curriculum change than I believed they would be...I have seen change I never thought I would see...away from traditional forms of teaching to embracing new ...ways of doing things (Respondent B)

FDs were enthusiastically developed in the south-west region with many partnerships developing between universities and FECs to develop appropriate curriculum.

iv. The Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) Initiative 2005 - 2010

Collaboration was promoted by HEFCE as the way forward, but many institutions complained of partnership fatigue.

"Some Pro Vice-Chancellors complained they chaired Aimhigher meetings in the morning and LLN meetings in the afternoon - often with mostly the same people" (Respondent I)

A former Deputy Principal of an FEC comments:

"[partnerships] tick their [universities] boxes for widening participation" (Respondent D)

by way of explanation as to why universities continued to invest the time in partnership working.

HEFCE viewed the LLN project as having two influences from the political field: firstly the requirement to meet the 50% participation target by 2010; and, secondly as a response to the agenda of New Labour for policy which was regional, and about skills and partnerships. The former HEFCE CEO believed strongly that institutions working together can create greater public value for their local community. He saw LLNs as:

"incentivizing institutions to work together and build local networks".

The reward would be greater student numbers (the so-called widening participation students). LLNs were initially meant to be a small pilot but were expanded beyond the original intention because of government interest in them. Once the government interest became known, every region wanted an LLN despite the reluctance to embark on an initiative so strongly influenced by American practice. LLNs became, then a:

"clear signal to the sector, and the outside, that we [HEFCE] were looking to start to develop the next phase of WP by looking at vocational routes...to take away the 'grace and favour' basis [of some admissions]" (Respondent A)

The LLN initiative was promoted by HEFCE rather than by government policy. This approach was new for HEFCE and was intended to build upon previous policy initiatives while at the same time acknowledging the autonomous nature of universities. The stated purpose of the project was to enable easier admission of students with vocational qualifications at level 3 into university. This was formalized into the "clarity, coherence and certainty" of the progression process. The precise nature of the way this would be achieved was left to each partnership to decide and record in a business plan. This produced widely differing responses:

"Some institutions said great and went off and did something. Others said "well what do you want?". We [HEFCE] said we did not mind; you do it your way. This was a challenge to some people" (Respondent A)

A HEFCE consultant commented that a memorable response to the project proposal was:

"...a complete waste of money...we are doing everything we need to already [in relation to widening participation]...we already work with other institutions in the city...it's patronizing...but we will take the money..." (Respondent I)

In general, it was felt that:

"LLNs were something that post-92s and FECs were going to make work...the Russells and the 1994s were there...and in some cases got involved" (Respondent A)

The south-west region was already heavily populated with HE in FE networks, universities committed to social inclusion and widening participation, and, participation in collaborative Aimhigher networks.

v. Competition and Collaboration

The initial field responses to the LLN proposals were, therefore, mixed.

"...I was never really sure what added value the LLN brought...I have often wondered if the money might not have been better spent on free places..." (Respondent B)

University B would have preferred the funding directed towards the LLN to be given to them directly for widening participation activities. In particular, they felt that the LLN was another structure being created outside of member institutions which was not effective or efficient. The informant understood that LLNs were about increasing the employability of young people.

Despite being

"...committed to it [widening participation] life and soul..." (Respondent F)

University L did not initially respond to the HEFCE call for proposal under the LLN project. It later joined one of the LLNs but this had proved problematic. Other partners in the LLN perceived University L as muscling in on their work. University L was also significantly bigger than all other partners. Perhaps because of this the LLN chose to manage the competition between institutions through a pragmatic division of curriculum. Each partner took the lead in a curriculum area which was ring fenced. In this way, the LLN was:

"more pragmatic, realistic and rational than some others that wanted to bond together and pretend we are not competing" (Respondent F)

University I viewed the LLNs as being set up to improve collaboration in the south-west region. In the informant's view:

"there was no need for it - [the LLN] we already had good collaboration in the south-west". (Respondent J)

University I believed that universities D (post-92, University Alliance) and F (traditional 1994 Group) were interested in the LLN and participated to be supportive. However, their commitment to the project was at a minimal level.

FECs were also mixed in their responses to the LLN initiative. One college Deputy Principal states:

"they [the LLN] tried too hard to establish what they were and did not end up doing very much. There were too many vested interests. The targets were never clear to us and there was no compelling argument for getting involved". (Respondent D)

vi. The LLN partnerships - responses from the field

Each south-west LLN experienced a different reception from the restricted field as the field members sought to keep control of their own position, and the HE in FE partnerships. The responses provide examples of the types of dispositions observed by Bourdieu in his field work. These are: disinterestedness, preservation of autonomy, the clientele of FECs under the control of the university, and the implications of gift exchange.

vii. The South-West Lifelong Learning Network (SWLLN) - An example of disinterestedness

The SWLLN was a general LLN network based in the western half of the region with University D (post-92, University Alliance) as the lead institution (the one which controlled the funding) and chaired by University F (traditional, 1994 Group). It was based on the pre-existing Aimhigher partnerships in the region. According to the former LLN Director extensive consultations with all the potential partners including FECs and regional offices were undertaken on the proposed business plan and the sectors. The LLN concentrated on

adult progression into higher education in the fields of public sector studies and heritage education. This LLN entered a field already heavily populated with HE in FE networks, and other partnerships. The LLN director saw the LLN as being about widening access and accessibility to higher education which she believed would result in wider participation. Of the university sector members, university college J (post-2004, GuildHE) was a strong partner in the LLN. She comments:

"we were different from the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (LLN), we were quite keen to broker the HE in FE relationship [by using staff from both sectors]...sometimes freelancers" (Respondent K)

The LLN Director comments on the political nature of the SWLLN in the south-west in relation to funding for extra students numbers:

"We had 218 additional student numbers (ASNs) places...both Universities D and I wanted us to bid for more growth but we would not play that game...in hindsight perhaps we should have done...the activity indicated a need for 1200 FTEs...but then no ASNs were approved..." (Respondent K)

She further comments that:

"ensuring senior members of the institutions are part of the governance...it was sometimes embarrassing in terms of the [SWLLN] lead institution's lack of presence...I didn't feel I had senior management buy in back at base" (Respondent K)

The Aimhigher regional manager comments:

"SWLLN was in a different position [than the other LLNs] as the job the LLNs were intended to do, was in a sense already being taken forward across the whole of the south-west by the HE in FE partnerships...they had already done much of the work...SWLLN had to find a space where they were not encroaching on these partnerships...they were pushed into corners..." (Respondent H)

SWLLN experienced the disinterested response from the field described by Bourdieu.

However, as he notes, there was an interest in the disinterest - that of protecting the university clienteles. None of the major HEIs involved in SWLLN were really interested in achieving the outcomes of the LLN project. However, all the HEIs had an interest in ensuring that the LLN did not affect their already established clienteles. The post-2002 HEI

was given a clear field to make maximum use of the available funding which enabled it to develop its work and enhance its reputation locally.

viii. The Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN) - an example of retaining autonomy through conflict management and reputation enhancement

The WVLLN operated as a general LLN in the eastern half of the region. University A (red brick, 1994 Group) was the lead institution and the chair was from University H (post-2002). The LLN concentrated on progression to higher education for Diploma holders^{xiii}. However, the entry of the WVLLN into the field was quite different to the SWLLN experience. It was built upon an existing formal consortium between universities A (traditional, 1994 Group), B (post-92, Million+ Group), and K (post 2002, GuildHE) which had successfully bid for HEFCE funding to support the development of Foundation Degrees. The consortium was joined in the LLN by universities H (post 2002) and L (post-92, University Alliance Group). The member of the original consortium comments:

*"HEFCE was influenced [in its LLN project] by the work of the consortium...citing several areas of our work as good practice"
(Respondent L)*

The LLN decided to build upon the work of the consortium and to broaden the offer of FDs under a common assessment and staff development arrangement. The competition element of the partnership was avoided by dividing the curriculum areas up with each partner have responsibility for one field. Because of the prior consortium, the LLN partnership members were senior staff from each institution with the power to take decisions on behalf of their organization. Other bodies such as Sector Skills Councils had been asked to attend meetings. The partnership decided upon a reasonable mechanism for distributing the funding and the ASNs. The ASNs were distributed to HE in FE partner colleges. The LLN was viewed as a type of 'clearing house model' but the respondent believed:

"...any [opportunity] to implement a clearing house model that might have underpinned the LLN was lost when the ASNs were apportioned to the partner universities rather than the LLN" (Respondent L)

A significant effort was made to bring together FE guidance staff and admissions tutors to share experiences of the process and then finding ways to improve communication. A HEFCE view of this LLN was:

"if you speak to x at University A, what has gone on is inspirational. If you speak to other bits of the University, you could never think it had happened" (Respondent I)

(This may also be true of larger FECs). The WVLLN is an example of a managed response to the LLN project, where the universities declared their interest in the LLN and were prepared to participate, but on their own terms. The division of curriculum areas and locations to develop a clientele were the strategies adopted to make the collaboration work. The lack of knowledge in the lead HEI about the work of the LLN is indicative of a different level of disinterest in widening participation within institutions. This disinterest is greater than just poor internal communications as evidenced by Hoare's (2011) research into widening participation in two HEIs which failed to mention the partnership activities which both were involved in, including LLNs.

ix. The Veterinary Lifelong Learning Network (VETNET LLN) in the south-west - an example of delayed gift exchange

This example underlines the point about the commitment of Russell Group members to the LLN initiative demonstrated by the strong hold on funding, the extended communications regime, and the requirement for the open field to change to meet pre-existing admissions requirements. In this instance, most veterinary degrees are located in research intensive universities and thus they were obliged to participate. University C was the regional lead for the national VETNET LLN which is a single curriculum area LLN focused on vocational progression into veterinary sciences. The national VETNET is hosted by the Royal Veterinary College (RVC). University C (traditional, Russell Group) participated in the LLN on condition that the funding was devolved to the regional hub. As with the other

LLNs, the managing board included only HE partners. This was based on a belief that HEFCE funding should be managed by HE institutions. The VETNET regional board agreed a regional plan; once this agreement had been reached, the plan was communicated to the FECs who were invited to join a steering committee. This committee contained a representative from each land-based college and some general FECs all of which delivered higher education courses. The LLN mapped the curriculum offer at level 3 and identified gaps in it which would preclude university entry. Generally, admissions tutors demanded A Level Chemistry, which most applicants did not hold, along with a vocational qualification. The VETNET LLN had only 3 ASNs which were managed by University C which developed a pre-vet programme using them. The respondent asserts that:

"this has increased the number of vocational learners accessing the vet programme" (Respondent M)

This is an example of a Russell Group university participating in the LLN in a highly controlled way in order to minimize any impact on autonomy.

x. The impact of LLN activity on institutional admissions - progression agreements as a test of trust within gift exchange

The test of trust within the LLN project was the development of progression agreements. However, in the context of some HE in FE partnerships where, for example, University I (post-92, University Alliance) had automatic progression agreements to level 6 learning for all Foundation Degree students, some partners did not see the need for further agreements. However, each LLN developed progression agreements for particular curriculum areas and qualifications. These agreements took various forms. For example, the VETNET agreement was at regional level and set out the progression arrangements for each qualification. If dog grooming, for example, was not accepted by an institution, this was clearly stated in the agreement. The end result of this mapping was a comprehensive section on the RVC website which sets out all the modules and options that are required for university entry. This has had an impact on colleges who were being asked by students to offer modules to meet the RVC requirements.

The VETNET LLN also worked with admission tutors particularly in relation to their views on vocational qualifications. Many admissions tutors knew little about them or the students who studied them. Equally, they knew little about the content of the A Level in Chemistry but knew the holder of a grade A in the exam gave them the product they needed to work with. While some admissions tutors would admit that vocational students were better at, for example, animal handling, this was not considered a particular advantage. VETNET LLN ensured all vocational qualifications were on the UCAS tariff.

To provide further support to vocational applicants, the VETNET LLN developed an Easter school to raise aspirations towards higher education for those with vocational qualifications at level 3. The students who attended this school demonstrated to admissions tutors that they could cope with the academic work, including chemistry. However, other issues were still problematic:

"...one of the vets summed it up. He said that he had really enjoyed working on the Easter school; that it was all worthwhile and he could see 2 or 3 in the group who would be successful. For the others, it was their communication skills...their interpersonal skills, they don't have the polish. To get past the interview you have to be able to express yourself". (Respondent M)

A different VETNET respondent notes that:

"gate keeping staff (e.g. Heads of Admissions, Course Directors, Admissions tutors etc)...where they have been 'converted' they have been extremely good ambassadors for changing practice to widen participation within their institutions". (Respondent N)

It is not clear whether this aspect of the trust (the more open approach of admissions tutors) lasted beyond the end of the LLN funding.

University B acknowledges that LLN funding had a big impact on one of its FEC partners which had grown significantly through the funding period. The FEC had gained a new university centre from the increased numbers provided by the LLN funding. This was seen as a large contribution to widening participation by placing higher education provision in a coastal town. It is not clear whether changes in admissions procedures followed this development.

University A offered higher education in a number of towns in Wiltshire, which would not have occurred without the LLN. Additionally, the Lifepilot careers website developed using LLN monies had been adopted outside of the LLN members. An immediate impact on individual admissions to member universities was the acceptance of adult literacy qualifications as an acceptable alternative to level 2 qualifications in English and Maths. The LLN team in University A had spent considerable efforts in working with admissions tutors to understand progression agreements for vocational qualifications. This work had been challenging but admissions tutors in a highly selective university now:

"recognize that vocational learners can achieve academically...[and] in a university over-subscribed with A Level applicants...that ...these students bring a diversity to the student body " (Respondent N)

She concludes that the attitudes of admissions tutors and teaching staff have been changed. University A also offers guaranteed interviews to some vocational applicants to specific degrees covered by the LLN work. The LLN progression coordinator states:

"we have made it much clearer as to the specific [vocational qualifications] which will be considered and these are listed in the prospectus" (Respondent N)

The development of higher education opportunities in new locations is a tangible outcome of trust, although the contribution of the FECs to this was not acknowledged.

University L felt that widening participation strategies did work and had been beneficial to the students they were intended to help. The strategies had advantaged those with other types of experience and qualifications (not just A Levels). This view was echoed by the Aimhigher respondent who felt that:

"LLNs have challenged the marginal status of vocational learners but not overcome it" (Respondent H)

Ultimately, however, the general view is that:

"when it comes to the bottom line - are academics going to compromise their admissions...the Russell Group were never going to change. They were quite happy to be involved in raising aspirations [Aimhigher]" (Respondent C)

Progression agreement negotiation was a significant feature of the LLN activities and outcomes. However, it is not clear that these agreements (and thus the trust in the partnership they represent) lasted past the end of the funding period.

vii. The impact of LLN partnerships on widening participation strategy and practice - protection of the status quo

Widening participation is, according to the Vice-Chancellor (VC) of a northern university:

"going to be challenged. Fair access is a narrow agenda, but it is high on the agenda of certain HEIs" (Respondent O)

The former senior manager at University B states:

"...some believe in widening participation and social inclusion, we did and I think a lot of people in Universities believe in that agenda. But they are not the only voices...some of the voices [supporting social inclusion] like me, are moving on..." (Respondent B)

A global outcome claimed by LLNs is that they

"kick started better [Information, Advice and Guidance] IAG, built better curriculum bridges and formulated progression agreements for non-traditional students" (Respondent P)

in universities; that they enabled diverse groups of people to learn from each other; and, in some locations provided multiple benefits to the partners. For example:

"...the LLN gave kudos to the [Russell Group] member, enabled a [university college] member to extend their mission; gave progression pathways to the [FEC]; enabled a [land-based college] to become more visible locally; and provided the City Council with a single conversation point for higher education in the City. (Respondent P)

(The kudos associated with LLN activity for the Russell Group university appeared to be with HEFCE and in the regional area. The university was seen to be leading on an initiative intended to bring together disparate partners and reach into the community. However, as the informant was a senior manager in the institution perhaps this aspect is over-emphasized.)

However, other Vice-Chancellors could not

"see the benefit of a network to facilitate progression" (Respondent O).

Despite all the partnership working, however, universities still remained in competition with each other, and with FECs in some instances. Collaboration was promoted by HEFCE as the way forward, but individual institutions found it difficult to put aside the competition for student numbers and other forms of funding. The VC of the northern university noted that the concern over competition could not completely be overcome.

"there were niggling tensions between HEIs and FECs competing...some were threatened and some not..." (Respondent O)

and

"we wanted a single portal for all enquiries...however, some institutions would not link. They wanted to keep their own enquiries and not share information they felt was commercially competitive" (Respondent O).

A former senior manager at University B noted the issues about competition not being resolved by the LLN activity:

"We are always having to manage competition for everything. HEFCE was always promoting collaboration. [LLN] was a great move towards collaboration but in my view is that collaboration cannot be forced...what it meant was that we had to find ways of managing those tensions between competition and collaboration" (Respondent B)

HEFCE gave a signal to the sector through the LLNs project that working with FECs was a good thing but:

"there are those who see FE as a risk...poor quality, you know...rogue-ish..." (Respondent A)

Increasing the number of places available for higher education:

"enables those with other types of qualifications and experiences, from other backgrounds to take advantage of them. As you strip the sector of places, they are the first casualties (Respondent F)

Institutional autonomy is fundamental to the field response to the influence of the political field. Newer institutions are acutely aware of their lesser ability to influence the direction of policy. The Russell Group institutions are perceived to have significant influence in the development of policy. A former HEFCE official sums this up as:

"never underestimate the ability of Oxbridge to mobilize the House of Lords..." (Respondent A)

Another HEFCE view is that:

"LLNs were not about widening participation, they were about vocational progression...there is an overlap..." (Respondent I)

The LLN project was summed up by the respondent from University B in the following way:

"I was never really sure what they achieved in terms of bringing more acknowledgement of the vocational route into higher education....widening participation is a much slower burn than anticipated" (Respondent B)

However, universities A, B, C, H, K and L have each committed £50,000 per annum to continue the work of their LLN. University L sees this continuation of the LLN work as a focus for widening participation. The people working for the LLN had made the case for the continuation of funding. One current view is of a member of the new partnership is

"...£50k is not that much in the scheme of things and it seems to do some good. If it died tomorrow...if it was under pressure and we had to reduce budgets...if it suddenly disappeared I would probably shrug my shoulders..." (Respondent F)

The VETNET LLN intends to become a self-funded membership network, once the HEFCE funding has finished^{xliii}. Arguably, the model of a single subject LLN (rather than a general LLN) has been more successful because of the ability to focus strongly on joint interests in the partnerships. There have been other benefits derived from this type of LLN:

"University C is now seen as less remote by the FECs...there are now direct links between admissions tutors and the FECs...the university members now talk to each other about common issues...rather than FECs dismissing University C as a potential progression route....they now know that we might take them" (Respondent M)

University I did not think LLNs had affected the structure of higher education provision. The respondent thought that:

"LLNs were badly thought through, and poorly implemented and managed...despite [HEFCE] having a genuine desire for change, it failed to be sufficiently directive to the sector...LLNs never had strategic direction" (Respondent J)

A former HEFCE respondent states that he hopes:

"that the evidence will show that at least for some institutions where LLNs have been successful, the experience of vocational learners will have changed...however, [he] doubts that LLNs have solved the issues around vocational progression [to HE]" (Respondent A)

A former senior HEFCE respondent is more positive that:

"LLNs strengthened the case for a more planned post-18 system; and contributed towards the 50% target...[however]...there were perhaps too many LLNs and other agencies...[which] needed co-ordination...". (Respondent Q)

This view was echoed in a different way by an FEC representative:

"...there were too many [partnerships]...the RDA with economic targets, the LLN with capacity targets, FECs with recruitment targets...[all] chasing different frameworks...makes collaboration difficult...that's why Aimhigher worked...it had a clear target (Respondent D)

However, another view is that:

"LLNs were a real missed opportunity...what was conceptually so exciting just became IAG [information, advice and guidance]...and a website and lost all of the vision...and energy behind it..." (Respondent C)

From the FE perspective, one positive view is that:

"Colleges will need to think now what do they want out of it [partnership]...whereas they have always been the subservient partner...the protective measures are breaking down...colleges will need to be smart and clear about the offer" (Respondent R)

The case study indicates that LLNs were a field disruption which enabled:

"enough money to do stuff but not enough to incentivize real change"
(Respondent C)

The case also indicates the problems of policy-making through an agency which did not have any mechanisms, other than funding, to attract institutions. In Kupfer's terms, it was not able to change the rules to enable the outcomes it wanted to be effected. Instead, HEFCE gave the university sector a problem to solve, that of the difficulty of navigating entry into higher education for level 3 students with vocational qualifications, and asked the sector to solve it. Whether it has been solved remains unclear, however, working in partnership has clear support as a former DP of an FEC asserts:

"I am a great believer that if we get a group of people together and they are competing they will learn things from each other. Dialogue is really important and getting out of your institution. It makes you go back and reflect, you see the institution in a different way. I think anything that gets people together and talking is a good thing but more focused talking is better..." (Respondent D)

This quotation sums up the pleasures and problems of partnerships. The pleasure is in the joint working and solving of issues. The problem is that the beneficiaries are likely to be the individuals in the partnership rather than the institutions. Unless the partnership representative holds a very strategic role in their own institution, the work of the partnership is likely to be peripheral to the core business.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

i. Introduction

The research enquiry was based on the aim of seeking a new insight into the policy strategy of partnership working and its impact on widening participation practice with particular reference to the South-west region of England. To this end, drawing on Bourdieu's anthropological studies and his work in the field of arts, an adaptation to Bourdieu's field theory was proposed for higher education (that of restricted and open field); and a suite of strategies and tactics, derived from the elements of field and habitus theory, formed a framework against which the case study sought to provide illumination. The incursion of the LLN into the field of higher education in the South-west of England was chosen as a relevant field disruption around which to test the theory. It is the response to the incursion that reveals the position and dispositions of the institutions and enables these to be examined and evaluated against a theoretical model.

Widening participation as an institutional practice revealed by the case study was found to be a highly political activity which some institutions and individuals found challenging. The responses to the challenge were at best cautious and at worst lacking in interest. There was apparently no common shared understanding of widening participation as a policy driver amongst the respondents and how this translates into their practice. Neither was there evidence of any concerted strategy within the south-west region to achieve real change through the work of the LLN, despite the fact that two counties in the region have no university.

ii. Field Responses

There was a split in the region in terms of responses to the Lifelong Learning Network initiative. The eastern half of the region welcomed the LLN as an opportunity to build upon a pre-existing partnership with other universities. Through the WVLLN each

individual university's own pre-existing HE in FE partnerships were grown using the ASNs and agreement was reached about changes to admissions requirements. The WVLLN saw a "clear market for HE in FE" within its area of influence but divided up the territory between each university partner to avoid competition. A tangible benefit for University A has been its success in obtaining other funded partnership work from HEFCE based upon its good reputation from the LLN activity.

The western half of the region did not see the LLN as an opportunity but as an inconsequential activity to which lip service was paid. This stance by the two major post-92 universities with large HE in FE networks took different forms. University L assisted the SWLLN but did not play a significant part in it, whereas University D, the purse holder, appeared not to provide any leadership, largely because of a change of Vice-Chancellor which brought a change in university strategy - moving towards research and away from widening participation. Major beneficiaries of the SWLLN were University Colleges which used its funding to develop their own activities in the absence of interest from others. The VETNET reception into the South-west region was more measured with University C cautiously making relationships with FECs (an anomaly for Russell Group members perhaps).

In general terms, the success of the partnership appears to be based on three ingredients: individuals who get on with each other, who have sufficient seniority in their organizations to be influential in obtaining change, and, the partnership offering tangible benefits to every partner. It would seem that these ingredients are more important than the goal of the partnerships itself. In other words, a partnership with a goal to widen participation in higher education - arguably a universal common good - may fail because individuals in the partnership do not get on with each other (there is some evidence in the case study about the sensitivity of the power structure in partnerships); or the lead institution in charge of the funding does not provide a senior staff member to lead the partnership so the possibility to influence change is limited; or they do not gain sufficient field capital out of the partnership to make it worth expending the resources to make it work.

iii. Theory adaptation development

In terms of the theory adaptation proposed then, it would appear that a Russell Group member, University C, with no previous experience of partnership with FECs, but leading the VETNET, has made some effort to embrace the objective of the LLNs in terms of vocational progression to a highly selective degree pathway. This has been achieved, however, as a regional hub in a national subject-specific scheme rather than as a commitment from the university as an institution (the university practice in relation to widening participation is described by Hoare (2011)).

The respondent felt that this had been a significant step forward for University C in terms of confidence building as it

"does not want to lose its status in the league tables as a research university...it wants to be one of the top ten universities in the world. It has huge targets and it attracts the sort of students, the money, and the grants...so it gave it [VETNET] a place in the region where certainly I would have said most of the FE colleges had not had any interaction really with University C particularly." (Respondent M)

The Russell Group university clearly views widening participation practice in the context of and its impact on its league table position. The unsaid implication, perhaps, being that WP students are more difficult to manage and less likely to achieve. The research intensive university is, apparently, primarily concerned with protecting reputation and keeping partnerships with FECs at a distance.

The WVLLN with members from four of the five position groups had embraced the LLN objectives. University A, in particular, saw the LLN as a way of developing its own HE in FE network which all other members of the WVLLN had. This development had changed the highly selective 1994 group university response to vocational learners. Members of this LLN were able to minimize the competition element by dividing up the curriculum and territory, allowing each HEI to develop or continue to develop its clientele.

The SWLLN membership comprised two large post-92 institutions and several small university colleges. The membership was over-represented by membership from the GuildHE group. However, the size of these members precluded any significant influence on

the work of SWLLN which was divided up between University D and University I. University I acquiesced to the LLN activity as long as it did not encroach on its own HE in FE partnership. University D appeared to use the funding as a way of enhancing its own reputation but a change of Vice-Chancellor during the funding period pushed the SWLLN to the periphery of the university's interests. The main beneficiaries of the SWLLN were the University Colleges and other smaller institutions such as adult education centres. The lead HEIs in SWLLN demonstrated the disinterestedness displayed by those in a powerful position while at the same time ensuring they were aware of the work of the LLN and its implication for their own established clienteles. Any encroachment into the pre-existing partnerships was discouraged. However, a smaller and newer HEI was able to use the LLN platform to develop its curriculum and reputation.

These responses indicate the trajectory of the overall field response in the south-west to the LLN initiative and suggest that the overall theory adaptation is valid.

iv. Revealing the dispositions

Four dispositions or practices relating to institutional habitus were considered pertinent to the proposed theory adaptation which the case study was designed to reveal. These were disinterestedness, clientele, gift exchange, and, trust. Each element of the habitus were revealed in different ways by the informants. Taken together they confirm the trajectory of the field towards partnership working to widen participation and give greater weight to the theory adaptation.

v. Disinterestedness

Widening participation in higher education is, theoretically, a universal goal which was supported by the 50% target and significant funding support. All universities have a formal widening participation strategy which is subject to the scrutiny of OFFA. Many universities claim widening participation is a core value and, as such, would have an interest in a funded project which might further support that goal. It seems, however, that the universal value is not powerful enough to overcome institutional position taking such as growth or protection of clientele or reputation and that these take precedence. For many

universities, not just those in the Russell Group, to commit institutionally to widening participation could mean, they believe, a drop in the league tables and in reputational position. As government funding, through HEFCE, is a decreasing proportion of many universities' budgets, less and less influence will be exerted on the activities of these universities. These universities can afford to have an HE in FE clientele or enter funded partnerships and give support when it suits them but will change position once the funding or political pressure stops.

At an operational level, however, it is the lack of knowledge of admissions tutors about level 3 qualifications which reveals the level of disinterestedness of universities in the work of their partners. University admissions staff knew little about vocational qualifications (or indeed the content of A Levels) and appear, at least where interviews were used for the most highly competitive courses, to value polish over potential. Those without polish were considered too risky. This was the most direct indicator of the perceived risks of the so-called widening participation students. Other comments alluded to the potential for admissions tutors to minimise this risk by choosing A Level students.

vi. Clientele

The building or protecting of a clientele featured in the responses of field to the LLN project. University B saw the "market for HE in FE" in a part of the region where it could be influential (Wiltshire) and where there was no existing HEI. University B concentrated on its activities in the north of the region to such an extent that a member college in Somerset (A18) could recall no contact with WVLLN at senior level at all. Whereas University I, for example, did not see the need for the LLN as a mechanism to promote collaboration with FECs because it believed it had achieved this through its large HE in FE network. SWLLN had to be careful in its activities not to encroach on the pre-existing partnership activities of Universities D and I.

Arguably, the development of a clientele such as an HE in FE partnership allowed the post-92s to grow their numbers with the least impact on the physical resources on their campus, But the clientele based in FECs also allowed them to "tick the box" for widening

participation as, it was assumed, all HE in FE students were in widening participation categories. This suggests that if HE in FE partnerships are dissolved, some Universities strongly committed to widening participation may find their situation quite different without their FEC partners' contribution.

vii. Gift Exchange

Gift exchange went far beyond the exchange of funding for access to widening participation categories of applicants. In each LLN formal progression agreements, of differing types and detail were agreed. The extent of the additional gift exchange, however, was only acknowledged by one LLN which commented:

"there is one college [College A8 which] if you want someone, or something done they will always send someone, they will be actively involved...it's part of their ethos [and a member of staff with a PhD in chemistry from College A2] has been amazingly proactive in this new project [a new chemistry module] [and] College A4 is developing a new vocational certificate"
(Respondent M)

Apart from the individual contributions of college partners, the respondent acknowledged the collaboration between competitors:

"There have been really good partnerships between the colleges which after all are competitors" (Respondent M)

and

"We are starting a series of visits so that all the VETNET members can visit one college and look at their facilities and share good practice" (Respondent M)

and by one member of the WVLLN (University B) on behalf of his own HE in FE network who commented that his institution wanted to learn from FECs. However, FEC respondents were acutely aware of the benefits that universities obtained from partnerships, particularly the HE in FE partnerships. The gaining of expertise in teaching and learning (with few resources) was mentioned several times but it was generally felt by FECs that their contribution to partnerships was overlooked.

viii. Trust

Despite trust being cited, particularly by FEC respondents as a key element of good partnership working not one FEC in the south-west region was included on the management board of the LLNs. All the strategic decisions were taken by universities who ensured that they held on to the power and funding. Once the decisions were taken they were communicated to the FECs through, for example, a steering group. The rationale for this was based on the funding coming from HEFCE and so the decision should be taken by universities. FECs were kept at a distance. In WVLLN, for example, FECs were dealt with through the HE partner; in VETNET they were invited to a steering group to learn the decisions of the management board. This mechanism indicates the unequal nature of partnership working between the restricted and open fields.

More seriously, there was clearly a view among staff at some universities that FECs are not trustworthy. One comment about them being managed by 'rogues' related to an incident which happened in the mid-1990s! Clearly university administrators and managers felt that FECs needed to be managed in the partnership relationship and to be kept in their place. This was strongly felt by the FEC respondents who believed that the university partners did not treat them as equals; and, did not see them as managers of large businesses in their own right, with equal expertise and experience. The FECs felt in some instances they were treated like children.

The issue of trust in partnerships was most strongly highlighted by the decisions of universities to close their HE in FE partnerships, often with little notice, in response to changing policy or funding issues. This had occurred several times in the region, with the 2011 funding changes bringing a wholesale dissolution of partnerships, leaving FECs to bid for their own HE places through HEFCE.

It was notable that during my interviews, FECs were not mentioned at all by several respondents. They just did not figure in their thinking about LLNs and partnerships. Indeed in once instance it was notable that a respondent mentioned several towns where there were colleges with which the university had partnered but the colleges were not named.

Taken together, the field trajectory as indicated by the dispositions of the respondents indicates that partnerships to widen participation in higher education are generally viewed by universities as a market opportunity to grow their student numbers and influence. Widening participation is a benevolent positive outcome of the growth strategy rather than a core value which informs practice. Funded partnerships to promote widening participation have had to contend with HE in FE partnerships in the south-west which have taken various positions towards LLNs and other partnerships which has materially affected their outcomes.

ix. Case implications for the work of Cardini, Kupfer and Naidoo

To some extent, this study confirms the findings of Cardini's (2006) study into Education Action Zones in that the LLN partnerships did not solve the problem they were set up to tackle. Part of this might be because of the varying views of some of the participants on the purpose of LLNs which ranged from improving employability to broadening (not widening) participation in higher education. Indeed, one respondent stated that LLNs were not about widening participation at all. They saw vocational progression as being something different. There is also some evidence to support Cardini's view that some partnerships are set up just to access the funding and with little attention paid to achieving the outcomes. In contrast, it is clear at the operational level of LLNs that great efforts were made to develop curriculum, to address admissions issues and to develop a shared understanding between HEIs and FECs to try to advantage students.

Kupfer's (2011) work on rules, resources, rigging and ranking was based on the way funding was utilised to support research in university. Research is the most prestigious element of university activity with elite universities wishing to protect their high rankings and post-92 universities trying to develop their reputations. Kupfer argues that public funding for research is manipulated by policy makers to ensure that those already highest in the rankings keep their high levels of funding and excellent resources through the manipulation of rules and the rigging of the outcomes of assessment exercises. While Kupfer's approach provides an important part of the context to this study how does it apply to an area of

university work which is not prestigious such as widening participation? Arguably, the LLN project deployed resources to the universities without any rules attached (each LLN was to prepare their own business plan which their own objectives) except that the partnership had to include a research-intensive university (RIU) in the partnership. Without any rules imposed by the funder or by policy, the LLN outcomes were variable and questionable, in some instances, in terms of value for money. Members of the Russell Group did not take a leading role in SWLLN or WVLLN and the VETNET manager expressed the fear of losing ranking that widening participation appears to encompass. In terms of rigging, it could be construed that universities have used HE in FE partnerships as a proxy for actually addressing widening participation in their own institutions. Kupfer claims that the political field can change the terms of competition through the manipulation of resources, however, in the case of the LLNs this is not so evident. Left to their own devices, universities appear to adopt the types of actions for themselves in relation to FECs that Kupfer ascribes to policy makers in their relationship to universities. The manipulation of LLN resources by universities to preserve the status quo resulted in the equivocal outcomes of the project.

Naidoo (2004) argues that higher education acts as a screen that allows the invisible realisation of social classification. She wonders what the processes are that allow this. The case study of the LLN incursion in the field of HE in the south-west of England reveals the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the field positions which incorporate differing habitus which makes it questionable whether anything as systematic and coherent as a process is present in widening participation practice. The arbitrary nature of the 'process' is demonstrated by the comment from the admissions tutor about the polish of the applicants. While organisational strategy may support widening participation, this study suggests that admissions tutors are a key element in making the strategy work. The LLN project revealed much about institutional responses to widening participation but was too weak an initiative to bring about convincing change throughout the restricted field.

x. Implications of the research method and methodology

The research enquiry was perhaps uneven in its balance of informants which were mainly from higher education. What had been intended to be a coherent, balanced view of a particular partnership became a more generalised account of the LLN experience. Within this context, however, the themes of the qualitative data are consistent among differing respondents. Chapter 4 charted data provided a thorough account of the partnership activity in the south-west region as well as nationally. Overall, the case study provides sufficiently strong data to test the proposed theoretical adaptation (albeit that perhaps more FEC respondents could have been included) and complements and extends the work of other researchers in the area of study. To this extent the study offers reliable and valid data from trustworthy and responsible sources.

xi. Re-considering the research questions

Within the overall research aim of obtaining a new insight into the impact of partnership working as a policy strategy to change the practice of widening participation with particular reference to the South-west region of England four questions were posed:

Has partnership in higher education been an effective way of changing the practice of widening participation?

In the case of the LLNs, each was allocated additional student numbers (ASNs) which were devoted to widening participation categories of students. Perhaps the best example of widening participation is the pre-vet programme developed by University C to attract non-traditional applicants. Structurally, higher education places are now available in Wiltshire where there is no university, and in Weston-super-Mare in North Somerset. These are the tangible outcomes of LLN activities. However, many respondents noted the 'slow burn' in relation to widening participation activities and the lack of hard outcomes. Widening participation takes time to achieve. In the context of universities changing their overall strategic direction with every change of Vice-Chancellor, widening participation appears to be not core business now.

Have the partnerships changed the existing structures and hierarchies in the field of higher education and to what effect?

The LLN project in the south-west region was an incursion into a field which was already heavily populated with partnerships between HE in FE which provided access to widening participation categories of students for universities. Given this context, the disturbance to the field was characterised by disinterest and protection by one section of the region; by cautious engagement by another; and, as a market opportunity by a third. In these respects, the LLN intervention in the field was managed by the universities according to their position in the field and their own trajectory. The field was not moved to offer a concerted response to the LLN initiative and so achieve the added outcome of a more planned approach to vocational progression across the LLN areas.

What are the characteristics of the partners' views and practices concerning the hierarchical structure and status of institutions within the field that were brought to the partnership arena?

The case study of the characteristics of the habitus dispositions of the LLN participants could be summed up as cautious particularly where the lead university had little experience of working with FECs. Where partners had more experience of each other, then frustration was expressed by FECs while universities tended to underplay the contribution of FECs. The universal good that widening participation encapsulated is clearly not felt in the same way in universities as it is in FECs. The frustration between expectation and realisation was summed up by the FECs feeling that they were treated unprofessionally at times.

In the south-west region of England, the game of widening participation in higher education was primarily concerned with growing student numbers in post-92 institutions which had all developed HE in FE networks. To some extent the region was considered a leader in this area of work. Funded partnerships to develop aspects of widening participation were met with an equivocal response in the region, which, on the whole, felt that it had done what was necessary to widen participation. In one specialist area, veterinary sciences the LLN has developed a partnership where none existed before. In the

south-west region the LLNs were not as influential as they may have been in other regions, however, the response to the LLN initiative has revealed the position taking and trajectory of the field response to widening participation through partnership work. The extensive charting of the partnerships in the appendices supports the validity of the proposed theoretical adaptation. However, universities are adopting a 'taken for granted' stance towards the contribution of FECs to widening participation.

xii. Conclusion

The research enquiry has been an exploratory exercise to test out a theoretical adaptation to Bourdieu's approach by applying concepts he developed in the field of the arts and applying these to the field of higher education. In addition, elements of the field dynamics and associated habitus were selected and applied to the work of partnerships in a defined regional area. These adaptations hold promise as an explanatory tool for further investigations into partnership working. In particular the theoretical adaptation of restricted and open fields allowed the universities to keep their autonomy from the political field and the prestige of their capital while allowing FECs to be acknowledged as providers of higher education of equivalent quality, if not prestige. The equivocal responses of members of the restricted field to the LLN project can now be explained in a theoretical framework and the widening participation practices revealed.

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Appendices

| No. | Title |
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| 4 | Involvement of The 1994 Group members in partnerships to widen participation |
| 5 | Involvement of The Million+ Group members in partnerships to widen participation |
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Appendix 1

Annotated list of Legislation and reports concerning widening participation in higher education 1963 - 2009

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| 1963 | National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Robbins Report) | "better use of under-utilised potential especially among those from lower socio-economic groups" |
| 1966 | A Plan for Polytechnics and other colleges (Anthony Crosland) | |
| 1987 | Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge | Set up Access to HE as 'third route into HE' |
| 1991 | Higher Education in Further Education Colleges: Franchising and other forms of collaboration with polytechnics Higher Education: A New Framework Higher Education in Further Education Colleges: The Funding Relationship | |
| 1992 | Further & Higher Education Act | End of binary system |
| 1995 | | HEFCE special initiatives to encourage widening participation of ethnic minorities in teacher training |
| 1996 | HEFCE Widening Access to Higher Education LSC Vocational Higher Education in Further Education | |
| 1997 | Dearing Report - National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education | Weak representation of lower SEGs attributed to their 'deficits'. Monitor admissions and participation against strategic aims. Increase collaboration between providers, flexibility & range of provision at sub-degree level with 'ladders & bridges' between FE and HE - Strategic planning and Foundation Degrees Student contribute to tuition fees and means tested maintenance grants to poorest |
| | HEFCE The Influence of neighbourhood type on participation in Higher Education. Learning Works - Widening Participation in Further Education (Kennedy Report) Further Education for the New Millennium - Dfee response to the Kennedy Report | Local strategic partnerships We are also placing a new emphasis on partnerships within the sector, to reduce the waste caused by unnecessary competition, and to ensure that the sector is better placed to meet future challenges. We have established a new Further Education Collaboration Fund to promote such partnerships within and beyond the FE sector. |
| 1998 | HEFCE The Nature of Higher Education and Further Education sub-contractual partnerships. | |
| 1999 | Briefing Note: Indexing Participation (CVCP now Universities UK) Foundation Degrees (DFEE) | Widening Participation in Higher Education; Funding proposal Improving provision for Disabled Students |
| 2000 | HEFCE Code of Practice on Indirect Funding 50% of 18-30s participate in HE by 2010 (Blair) The Excellence Challenge: Proposals for Widening Participation of Young People in Higher Education HEFCE Diversification in Higher Education HEFCE Widening Participation in Higher Education HEFCE Funding for Widening Participation in Higher Education HEFCE Widening Participation in Higher Education: Action on Access Social Class & Higher Education | |
| 2001 | | |
| 2001 | OECD Wellbeing of Nations | sustainable consumption flows, sustainable capital stock including human, access to wealth via income, subjective well being |
| 2002 | Excellence Challenge: Partnerships for Progression | Set up AimHigher Set up the Strategic Development Fund for HEFCE |
| 2003 | | Widening Participation in Higher Education as ...meeting the new manpower needs for the 21 st century Set up Office of Fair Access (OFFA) |
| | The Future of Higher Education (Charles Clarke) Fair Access arrangements Evaluation of collaboration between HEIs and FECs to increase participation in higher education (Institute for Access Studies) | |
| 2004 | Higher Education Bill 2004: The Future of Higher Education HEFCE Young Participation in Higher Education HEFCE widening participation and fair access research strategy | Top up fees introduced |
| 2006 | Review of Widening Participation Widening Participation in Higher Education Widening Participation in Higher Education 2 Demand for Higher Education 2020 | Develop access policies Supply & Demand in Higher Education |
| 2009 | Higher Ambitions (Mandelson) Higher Education engagement with schools and colleges: partnership development (Universities UK) | Partnerships for Progression How to think about Widening Participation in the UK |

Annotated list of Legislation and reports concerning lifelong learning policy in higher education 1918 - 2010

| | | |
|------|---|---|
| 1918 | Education Act (Herbert Fisher) | Lifelong learning conceptualised – "a system of education available for all persons capable of profiting by it" |
| 1966 | Open University (Jennie Lee) | |
| 1972 | UNESCO Report | Lifelong learning articulated - support for all forms of adult learning |
| 1973 | Adult Education: a Plan for Development (Sir Lionel Russell) | Set up Advisory Council for Adult Education |
| 1997 | Learning for the twenty-first century (Fryer Report) National Adult Learning Survey | National Advisory Group for Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning |
| 1998 | Learning Age: A renaissance for a new Britain (David Blunkett) | Green paper on Lifelong Learning |
| | Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century UNESCO | |
| 2001 | | Social cohesion and how education affects it. |
| 2003 | Budapest Declaration of the Council of Europe White Paper on Higher Education | WP is part of Lifelong Learning |
| 2004 | Joint letter HEFCE/LSC Lifelong Learning Networks | |
| 2009 | Lifelong Learning Networks – attributes of students and networks 2006 – 7 and 2007 – 8. | |
| 2010 | Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme | Equivocal results |

Appendix 2

Membership of Position Groups 2010

The Russell Group

University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
Imperial College, London
Kings College, London
University of Leeds
University of Liverpool
University College, London

University of Manchester
Newcastle University
School of Oriental & African Studies, London
University of Oxford
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University of Warwick
The London School of Economics & Political Science

Note: Data obtained from the following websites: The Russell Group. 2010. Home Page, 28/10/2010 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>. In 2012 four universities moved from the 1994 Group to join the Russell Group.

The 1994 Group

University of Bath
Birkbeck College, London
Durham University
University of East Anglia
University of Essex
University of Exeter
Goldsmiths, London
Institute of Education, London
Lancaster University

University of Leicester
Loughborough University
Queen Mary, University of London
University of Reading
Royal Holloway, University of London
University of Surrey
University of Sussex
University of York

Note: Data obtained from the following websites: 1994 Group. 2010. About Us 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.1994group.ac.uk/>

The Million+ Group

Anglia Ruskin University
Bath Spa University
University of Bedfordshire
Birmingham City University
University of Bolton
University of Central Lancashire
Coventry University
University of Derby
University of East London
University of Greenwich
Kingston University
Leeds Metropolitan University

London Metropolitan University
London South Bank University
Middlesex University
University of Northampton
Roehampton University
Southampton Solent University
Staffordshire University
University of Sunderland
Teesside University
Thames Valley University
University of Wolverhampton

Note: Data obtained from the following websites: Million+. 2010. *The University Think-Tank* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/>

The University Alliance

University of Bournemouth
University of Bradford
De Montford University
University of Hertfordshire
University of Lincoln
Liverpool, John Moores University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Northumbria University
Nottingham Trent University

Open University
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
University of Portsmouth
University of Salford
Sheffield Hallam University
Teesside University
University of the West of England, Bristol

Note: Data obtained from the following websites: University Alliance. 2010. Home Page 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.university-alliance.ac.uk/>

The Guild HE

University of Winchester
University of Worcester
Arts University College, Bournemouth
Bishop Grossetestes University College, Lincoln
Buckinghamshire New University
Harper Adams University College
Leeds Trinity University College
Newham University College
Norwich University College of the Arts
Ravensbourne

Rose Bruford College
Royal Agricultural College
St Mary's University College, Twickenham
The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts
University College Birmingham
University College Falmouth
University College Plymouth St Mark & St John
University for the Creative Arts
Writtle College
York St John University

Note: Data obtained from the following websites: GuildHE. 2010. Home Page 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/>

APPENDIX 3

Involvement of the Russell Group members in partnerships to widen participation

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|------|-------|----------------|--|-----------|---|
| | University of Warwick | X | | | CWLLN | | | |
| | University of Southampton | X | | | H&WLLN | | | |
| | University of Sheffield | X | | | SYLLN | | | |
| | University of Oxford | X | | | | | | |
| | School of Oriental & African Studies, London | X | | | LINKING LONDON | | | |
| | Newcastle University | X | | | VETNET NEHSN | | | X |
| | University of Manchester | X | | | GMSA | | | X |
| | The London School of Economics & Political Science | X | | | | | | X |
| | University College, London | X | LHEC | | | | | X |
| | University of Liverpool | X | | | VETNET GMWLLN | | | X |
| | University of Leeds | X | | | WYLLN | | WAKEFIELD | X |
| | Kings College, London | X | LHEC | SELLN | | | | X |
| | Imperial College, London | X | | | | | | X |
| | University of Cambridge | X | | | VETNET MOVE | | | X |
| | University of Bristol | X | | | VETNET WYLLN | | | |
| | University of Birmingham | X | | | BBCSLN H&WLLN | | | |
| Russell Group | | X | | | | | | |
| Formal partnership with FEC group | | | | | | | | |
| Lead LLN HEI | | | | | | | | |
| Partner HEI in LLN | | | | | | | | |
| Successful bid New University Challenge | | | | | | | | |
| Unsuccessful bid New University Challenge | | | | | | | | |
| Successful Economic Challenge Investment Fund | | | | | | | | |

Note

Data obtained from the following websites:

The Russell Group. 2010. *Home Page*, 28/10/2010 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>
 Fraser, Michelle, Graham Orange, Ah-Lian Kor, and Mark Stone. 2009. The creation, operation and future of HE in FE partnerships - conference paper companion resource: Examples of HE/FE Partnerships. In *HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective*. Warwick.

SQW. 2010. Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme. edited by HEFCE: HEFCE.

Higher Education Funding Council for England. 2011. *Economic Challenge Investment Fund - Funding Allocations 2011* [cited 01/03/2011 2011]. Available from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/challenge/ecif.htm>.

Appendix 4

Involvement of 1994 Group members in funded partnerships to widen participation

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------|---|
| | University of York | X | | | | | |
| | University of Sussex | X | | | | | X |
| | University of Surrey | X | | | | | X |
| | Royal Holloway, University of London | X | LHEC | | | | |
| | University of Reading | X | | PROGRESS SC | | | X |
| | Queen Mary, London | X | LHEC | | CREATIVE WAY | | X |
| | Loughborough University | X | | | SKILLS SC | | X |
| | University of Leicester | X | | SKILLS SC | | | X |
| | Lancaster University | X | | | CHL LLN | | |
| | Institute of Education London | X | LHEC | | | | X |
| | Goldsmiths, London | X | LHEC | | | | |
| | University of Exeter | X | CUC | | SELLN SELLN CREATIVE WAY | | X |
| | University of Essex | X | UCS UE&SEEC | | MOVE CREATIVE WAY | THURROCK | X |
| | University of East Anglia | X | UCS | | MOVE | | X |
| | Durham University | X | | | NEHSN | | X |
| | Birkbeck College, London | X | LHEC | LINKING LONDON | CREATIVE WAY | | |
| | University of Bath | X | | WVLLN | | SALISBURY | X |
| 1994 Group | | | | | | | |
| Formal partnership with FEC group | | | | | | | |
| Lead LLN HEI | | | | | | | |
| Partner HEI in LLN | | | | | | | |
| Successful bid New University Challenge | | | | | | | |
| Unsuccessful bid New University Challenge | | | | | | | |
| Successful Economic Challenge Investment Fund | | | | | | | |

Note

Data obtained from the following websites:

1994 Group. 2010. *About Us* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.1994group.ac.uk/>

Fraser, Michelle, Graham Orange, Ah-Lian Kor, and Mark Stone. 2009. The creation, operation and future of HE in FE partnerships - conference paper companion resource: Examples of HE/FE Partnerships. In *HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective*. Warwick.

SQW. 2010. Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme. edited by HEFCE: HEFCE.

Higher Education Funding Council for England. 2011. *Economic Challenge Investment Fund - Funding Allocations* 2011 [cited 01/03/2011 2011]. Available from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/challenge/ecif.htm>.

Appendix 5

Involvement of Million+ members in funded partnerships to widen participation

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------|---|
| University of Wolverhampton | X | | | |
| Thames Valley University | X | LHEC | WLLLN | BBCSLLN SSSTWLLN |
| Teeside University | X | | NEHSN | |
| University of Sunderland | X | US&FEP | | NEHSP |
| Staffordshire University | X | SURF | SSSTWLLN | |
| Southampton Solent University | X | | H&IWLLN | |
| Roehampton University | X | LHEC | | SILLN |
| University of Northampton | X | | | SKILLSSC |
| Middlesex University | X | HETP LHEC | | LINKING LONDON |
| London South Bank University | X | LHEC | | SUNNN LINKING LONDON SELLN |
| London Metropolitan University | X | LHEC | | LINKING LONDON CREATIVE WAY |
| Leeds Metropolitan University | X | RUN | | SSC |
| Kingston University | X | LHEC | SLLN | |
| University of Greenwich | X | LHEC | KMLLN | SILLN SELLN CREATIVE WAY |
| University of East London | X | LHEC | CREATIVE WAY | LINKING LONDON |
| University of Derby | X | | LEAP AHEAD | |
| Coventry University | X | | CVLLN | |
| University of Central Lancashire | X | | LLLN | CHL |
| University of Bolton | X | | | GMSA |
| Birmingham City University | X | | | BBCSLLN |
| University of Bedfordshire | X | UBPC | | MOVE |
| Bath Spa University | X | WSESSEX PARTNERSHIP | | WVLLN |
| Anglia Ruskin University | X | RUP | | MOVE CREATIVE WAY |
| | Million+ | Formal partnership with FEC group | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN |
| | | | | Successful bid New University Challenge |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--|--|---|---|---------------|---|---------------------------|---|--|--|--------|------------------|--|--|----------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| Unsuccessful bid New University Challenge | HAVERING PETERBOROUGH | | | | | WIGAN & LEIGH | | NORTH DEBY & NOT NITTS | | | | HALFAX | GOLE & HARROGATE | | | NORTH NOTHANTS | | | DEARNE VALLEY SHROPSHIRE | ASHINGTON & BERWICK | | | SOUTH BLACK COUNTRY |
| Successful Economic Challenge Investment Fund | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | | | X | X | X | | X | | | |

Note

Data obtained from the following websites:

Million+. 2010. The University Think-Tank 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/>

Fraser, Michelle, Graham Orange, Ah-Lian Kor, and Mark Stone. 2009. The creation, operation and future of HE in FE partnerships - conference paper companion resource: Examples of HE/FE Partnerships. In HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective. Warwick.

SQW. 2010. Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme. edited by HEFCE: HEFCE.

Appendix 6

Involvement of University Alliance members in funded partnerships to widen participation

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|---|---|---|
| University of the West of England | X | | | WVLLN | SWINDON | DORSET | |
| Teeside University | X | | NEHSN | | | | X |
| Sheffield Hallam University | X | CAN | SYLLN | | | | X |
| University of Salford | X | | | GMSA | | | |
| University of Portsmouth | X | | | HWLLN | | | |
| University of Plymouth | X | UPC | | SWLLN | | | X |
| Oxford Brookes University | X | | | PROGRESS | | | X |
| Open University | X | | | 16 LLNS | | | |
| Nottingham Trent University | X | | VETNET | | | | |
| Northumbria University | X | | NEHSN | | | | X |
| Manchester Metropolitan University | X | GMSA | GMSA | | | | |
| Liverpool John Moores University | X | | | | | | X |
| University of Lincoln | X | HFEHEC | | SKILLSSC | | | |
| University of Huddersfield | X | HPCET HUDCETT | WVK | | | X | |
| University of Hertfordshire | X | | MOVE | | | HERTFORDSHIRE | X |
| De Montfort University | X | | SSC | | | | X |
| University of Bradford | X | | | WVLLN | | | X |
| University of Bournemouth | X | | SWLLN | | SOMERSET | | |
| University Alliance | | Formal partnership with FEC group | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN | Successful bid New University Challenge | Unsuccessful bid New University Challenge | Successful Economic Challenge Investment Fund |

Note

Data obtained from the following websites:

University Alliance. 2010. *Home Page* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.university-alliance.ac.uk/>

Fraser, Michelle, Graham Orange, Ah-Lian Kor, and Mark Stone. 2009. The creation, operation and future of HE in FE partnerships - conference paper companion resource: Examples of HE/FE Partnerships. In *HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective*. Warwick.

SQW. 2010. Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme. edited by HEFCE: HEFCE.

Higher Education Funding Council for England. 2011. *Economic Challenge Investment Fund - Funding Allocations* 2011 [cited 01/03/2011 2011]. Available from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/challenge/ecif.htm>.

Appendix 7

Involvement of Guild HE members in funded partnerships to widen participation

| | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------|--|---|---|---|
| York St John University | | HIGHER YORK | YHLLN | | | X |
| Writtle College | | | MOVE | | | X |
| University for the Creative Arts | | | KMLLN ARTSLIN | | | X |
| University College Plymouth St Mark & St Luke | | | SWLLN | | | |
| University College Falmouth | CUC | | SWLLN ARTSLIN | | | X |
| University College Birmingham | | BBCSLN | | | | |
| The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts | | | | | | |
| St Mary's University College, Twickenham | LHEC | | WVLLN | | | X |
| Royal Agricultural College | | | | | | |
| Rose Bruford College | LHEC | | ARTS LLN CREATIVE WAYS ARTS LLN CREATIVE WAYS | | | |
| Ravensbourne | LHEC | | MOVE ARTS LLN | | | X |
| Norwich University College of the Arts | | | BBSLLN | | | |
| Newham University College | | | WVLLN | | | |
| Leeds Trinity University College | | | SSSTWLLN | | | |
| Harper Adams University College | | | | | AYLESBURY | X |
| Buckinghamshire New University | | | | | | |
| Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln | | | SKILLS SC | | | |
| Arts University College, Bournemouth | | | SWLLN ARTS LLN | | | |
| University of Worcester | | H&WLLN | | | HEREFORDSHIRE | X |
| University of Winchester | | H&WLLN | | | BASINGSTOKE | X |
| | Formal partnership with FEC group | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN | Successful bid New University Challenge | Unsuccessful bid New University Challenge | Successful Economic Challenge Investment Fund |

Note

Data obtained from the following websites:

GuildHE. 2010. *Home Page* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/>

Fraser, Michelle, Graham Orange, Ah-Lian Kor, and Mark Stone. 2009. The creation, operation and future of HE in FE partnerships - conference paper companion resource: Examples of HE/FE Partnerships. In *HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective*. Warwick.

SQW. 2010. Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme. edited by HEFCE: HEFCE.

Appendix 8

Membership of HE in FE partnerships in the south-west region

Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) (2010)

| |
|--|
| University of Exeter |
| University of Plymouth |
| University College Falmouth |
| Truro College |
| Penwith College |
| Cornwall College |
| Penninsula College of Medicine & Dentistry |

Note: Data obtained from <http://www.cuc.ac.uk/about-cuc/cuc-faq>

Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire Partnership

| |
|-----------------------------|
| University of Bournemouth |
| Bridgwater College |
| Wiltshire College |
| Kingston Maurward College |
| Bournemouth & Poole College |
| University Centre Yeovil |
| Weymouth College |

Note: Data obtained from: http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/accessforall/our_partners/bu_partner_colleges.html

The Wessex Partnership

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Bath Spa University |
| Bridgwater College |
| Bristol Institute of Modern Music |
| Circomedia |
| City of Bath College |
| City of Bristol College |
| New College, Swindon |
| Norton Radstock College |
| Weston College |
| Wiltshire College |
| Wiltshire LEA |
| Wiltshire LA |
| Torbay NHS Trust |
| Action for Children |
| South West Screen |

Note: Data obtained from: <http://www.wessexpartnership.com/>

UWE Federation

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| University of the West of England |
| City of Bristol College |
| City of Bath College |
| Cirencester College |
| Filton College |
| Gloucestershire College |
| New College Swindon |
| Richard Huish College |
| Stroud College |
| Weston College |
| Wiltshire College |
| Yeovil College |

Note Data obtained from: <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/theuwefederation/aboutthefederation.aspx>

University of Plymouth Colleges Faculty

| |
|---|
| University of Plymouth |
| Bicton College of Agriculture (Budleigh Salterton), |
| Bridgwater College, |
| City of Bristol College, |
| Cornwall College (includes Cornwall College Camborne, Duchy College in Rosewarne near Camborne, Duchy College at Stoke Climsland near Callington, Cornwall College Newquay, Cornwall College St Austell, Cornwall College Saltash, Falmouth Marine School), |
| East Devon College (Tiverton), |
| Exeter College, North Devon College (Barnstaple), |
| Penwith College (Penzance), |
| City College Plymouth, |
| Somerset College of Arts & Technology (Taunton), |
| South Devon College (Torquay) |
| Truro College |
| Mouse Training |
| Royal Navy HMS Drake |
| Treviglas Community College |
| Estover Community College (Plymouth), |
| Highlands College (Jersey), |
| The John Kitto Community College (Plymouth) and |
| Weymouth College |

Data obtained from: <http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=6718>

Appendix 9

Position group involvement in Lifelong Learning Networks (2010)

The Russell Group

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| University of Warwick | | CWLLN |
| University of Southampton | | H&WLLN |
| University of Sheffield | | SYLLN |
| University of Oxford | | |
| School of Oriental & African Studies | | LINKING LONDON |
| Newcastle University | | VETNET NEHSN |
| University of Manchester | | GMSA |
| The London School of Economics | | |
| University College, London | | |
| University of Liverpool | | VETNET GWWLLN |
| University of Leeds | | WVLLN |
| Kings College, London | SELLN | |
| Imperial College, London | | |
| University of Cambridge | | VETNET MOVE |
| University of Bristol | | VETNET WVLLN |
| University of Birmingham | | BBCSLN H&WLLN |
| | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN |

The 1994 Group

| | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| University of York | | Y&HLLN |
| University of Sussex | | SLN |
| University of Surrey | | PROGRES SC |
| Royal Holloway, University of London | | SYLLN WELLN |
| University of Reading | PROGR ESS SC | |
| Queen Mary, University of London | | CREATIVE WAY |
| Loughborough University | | SKILLS SC |
| University of Leicester | SKILLS C | |
| Lancaster University | | CHL LLLN |
| Institute of Education, London | | |
| Goldsmiths, London | | SLLNSEL |
| University of Exeter | | SWLLN |
| University of Essex | | MOVE CREATIVE WAY |
| University of Durham | | MOVE |
| University of Birkbeck College, London | | NEHSN |
| University of Bath | LINKING LONDON WAY | |
| | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN |

The Million+ group

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| University of Wolverhampton | | PROGRES SC |
| Thames Valley University | WVLLN | |
| Teeside University | NEHSN | |
| University of Sunderland | | NEHSP |
| Salfordshire University | SSSTWL LN | |
| Southampton Solent University | H&WLLN | |
| Roehampton University | | SYLLN |
| University of Northampton | | SKILLS SC |
| Middlesex University | | LINKING LONDON |
| London South Bank University | | LINKING LONDON |
| London Metropolitan University | | LINKING LONDON CREATIVE |
| Leeds Metropolitan University | | SSC |
| Kingson University | SLN | |
| University of Greenwich | KWLLN | SELLN CREATIVE |
| University of East London | CREATIVE WAY | LINKING LONDON |
| University of Derby | LEAP AHEAD | |
| Coventry University | CVLLN | |
| University of Central Lancashire | LLN | CHL |
| University of Bolton | | GMSA |
| Birmingham City University | | BBCSLN |
| University of Bedfordshire | | MOVE |
| Bath Spa University | | WVLLN |
| Anglia Ruskin University | | MOVE CREATIVE WAY |
| | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN |

The University Alliance

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| University of the West of England | | WVLLN |
| Teeside University | NEHSN | |
| Sheffield Hallam | SYLLN | |
| University of Salford | | GMSA |
| University of Portsmouth | | HIWLLN |
| University of Plymouth | | SWLLN |
| Oxford Brookes | | PROGRES SC |
| Open University | | 16 LLNS |
| Nottingham Trent | | VETNET LEAP |
| Northumbria University | | NEHSN |
| Manchester Metropolitan | GMSA | |
| Liverpool, John Moores | | |
| University of Lincoln | | SKILLS SC |
| University of Huddersfield | WVYK | |
| University of Hertfordshire | MOVE | |
| De Montfort University | SSC | |
| University of Bradford | | WVLLN |
| University of Bournemouth | SWLLN | |
| | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN |

The Guild HE

| | | |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------|
| York St John University | HIGHER YORK | YHLLN |
| Writtle College | | MOVE |
| University for the Creative Arts | | KMLLN ARTS LLN CREATIVE WAY |
| University College Plymouth St Mark & St John | | SWLLN |
| University College Falmouth | | SWLLN ARTS LLN |
| University College Birmingham | BBCSLN | |
| The Liverpool Institute for | | |
| St Mary's University College, | | |
| Royal Agricultural College | | WVLLN |
| Rose Bruford College | | ARTS LLN CREATIVE WAY |
| Ravensbourne | | ARTS LLN CREATIVE WAY |
| Nottingham University College of the Arts | | MOVE ARTS LLN |
| Newham University College | | BBSLLN |
| Leeds Trinity University College | | WVLLN |
| Harper Adams University College | | SSSTWLLN |
| Buckinghamshire New University | | |
| Bishop Grosseteste's University College, | | SKILLS SC |
| Arts University College, | | SWLLN ARTS LLN |
| University of Worcester | H&WLLN | |
| University of Manchester | H&WLLN | |
| | Lead LLN HEI | Partner HEI in LLN |

Note

Data obtained from the following websites:
The Russell Group. 2010. *Home Page*. 28/10/2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>
Fraser, Michelle, Graham Orange, Ah-Lian Kor, and Mark Stone. 2009. The creation, operation and future of HE in FE partnerships - conference paper companion resource: Examples of HE/FE Partnerships. In *HE in FE culture and experience: a partnership perspective*. Warwick.
SQW. 2010. Summative evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Network programme. edited by HEFCE: HEFCE.
Higher Education Funding Council for England. 2011. *Economic Challenge Investment Fund - Funding Allocations*. 2011 [cited 01/03/2011 2011]. Available from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/challenge/ecif.htm>.
1994 Group. 2010. *About Us*. 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.1994group.ac.uk/>
Millions+. 2010. *The University Think-Tank*. 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.millionsplus.ac.uk/>
University Alliance. 2010. *Home Page*. 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.university-alliance.ac.uk/>
GuildHE. 2010. *Home Page*. 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/>

Appendix 10

Lifelong Learning Network Memberships in the south-west region

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| South-west Lifelong Learning Network | |
| Restricted Field Members | Open Field Members |
| University of Exeter | Bicton College |
| University of Bournemouth | Somerset College |
| Plymouth University | Salisbury College |
| The Arts Institute, Bournemouth | Exeter College |
| The Open University – south-west | Yeovil College |
| University College St Mark & St John MARJON | PETROC |
| University College, Falmouth | Kingston Maurward |
| Dartington College | City College, Plymouth |
| | Plymouth College of Art & Design |
| | Bournemouth & Poole College |
| | Weymouth College |
| | South Devon College |
| | Truro College |
| | Cornwall College |
| Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network | |
| University of Bath | Hartpury College |
| University of Bristol | National Star College |
| Bath Spa University | Gloucestershire College |
| University of the West of England | Stroud College |
| University of Gloucester | Royal Forest of Dean College |
| | Filton College |
| | New College, Swindon |
| | Swindon College |
| | City of Bristol College |
| | City of Bath College |
| | Weston College |
| | Norton Radstock College |
| | Bridgwater College |
| | Strode College |
| | Yeovil College |
| VETNET South-west | |
| University of Bristol | Warwickshire College |
| University of Bournemouth | Herefordshire College |
| Plymouth University | Hartpury College |
| University of the West of England | Cirencester College |
| Royal Agricultural College | Wiltshire College |
| University of Worcester | Filton College |
| University of Gloucester | Weston College |
| | Norton Radstock College |
| | Bridgwater College |
| | Bicton College |
| | Kingston Maurward College |
| | South Devon College |
| | Cornwall College |
| Arts Lifelong Learning Network – South-west | |
| Arts Institute, Bournemouth | Plymouth College of Art and Design |
| University College, Falmouth | |

Appendix 11 Policy theme analysis extract

| Year | Pre-policy | Policy | Operationalise | Funding |
|-------------|---|--|--|--|
| 1996 | | | Widening Access to Higher Education | |
| 1997 | Tony Blair 50% in HE | | | |
| 1997 | | Committee of Enquiry into HE | | |
| 1998 | | | WP in HE: Funding proposals | |
| 1998 | | | Special Project funding: developing regional partnerships between HEIs, schools and community | |
| 1998 | | | | Additional Student Numbers (ASNs) annual exercise |
| 1999 | | | Special programme of WP projects HEIs/FECs/LLNs | |
| 1999 | | | | Improving provision for disabled students |
| 1999 | | | | Postcode premium funding supplements |
| 1999 | | | Strategic plan for WP from HEIs | |
| 1999 | | | Performance Indicators for HEIs | |
| 1999 | | | | Joint programme of mentoring with schools |
| 2000 | | Excellence Challenge | | |
| 2000 | | Diversity in higher education: HEFCE policy statement | | |
| 2000 | | | | Funding supplement |
| 2001 | | | Good practice guides in WP | |
| 2001 | | HEIs work with schools and FECs. Must grow DEMAND (Lewis 2000) | | |
| 2000-2004 | | | | Postcode premium funding supplements - annual rounds |
| | | Excellence in Cities | | |
| | | Education Action Zones | | |
| 2001 | | | | Foundation Degrees specific allocation of ASNs |
| 2001 | | | | Opportunity bursaries |
| 2001- 2003 | | | | Summer Schools |
| 2001 | | Partnerships for Progression | | |
| 2002 | | | Action on Access established | |
| 2002 - 2004 | | | | Aspiration premium |
| 2002 | Closer by Degrees, The Past, Present & Future of HE in FECs | | | |
| 2003 | | The Future of Higher Education | | |
| 2003 | | LSDA responds - The future of higher education | | |
| 2003 | | Widening Participation in higher education | | |
| 2003 | | | Endorsed and approved further work to build upon existing collaborative developments in HE/FE and establish a series of LLNs | |

Appendix 12
Initial Interview Schedule

Questions to Lifelong Learning Network Managers

What is the distinctive character or characteristic of your Network?

Why and how has this character/characteristic been developed and sustained?

How was the Network constructed? What boards, teams and groups are in operation?

How do these groups keep on task and report back to the board?

How do the groups make contacts in the field and report back on impact? Are there issues of boundaries?

What are the impact measures that are used to evaluate the success of projects and activities?

LLNs are supposed to be bottom-up influencers on policy making at the national level. What are the processes you are aware of for getting items to the notice of policy makers?

Is the LLN a partnership? Can you describe the 'spirit of partnership' – if there is one?

Has the LLN faced any issues such as:

Contribution of the partners (perhaps unequal);
Meeting targets for ASNs;
Competition;
Geographical issues – centre and periphery?
Sustainability.

Appendix 13

Extract from analysis of interview data

| Respondent | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|--|------------|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| Date | | 20/08/2010 | 21/06/2010 | 12/04/2010 | | | 21/07/2010 | 27/07/2010 | 26/072010 | | 02/06/2010 |
| LLN | | | Chair NLLN Partner Higher York LLN | WVLLN | Linked to GMSA | All LLNs and NLLN | NEHSN | Action on Access West Yorks LLN | None, the RDA did not sit on the Boards of any LLNs | Role to manage dissemination of information about the project across the region and manage reporting process to HEFCE | |
| Policy | | | 50% target not thought through | WP different from BP. WP is about getting more people into HE; BP is about attracting more members of under- represented groups (Butt) | Policy environment has changed since 2005 when partnership operated in a different political environment. Then the general climate was trusting, collaborative and collegial. This is not the case now. | Doubt if vocational learner marginal status has been changed overall, but in some places yes. | We were one of the few LLNs that went for a pan- regional model. Wisconsin was not our driver. We did not include an RIU in our original bid. We built on an existing partnership. The Wisconsin model may come around again in Teeside as FE colleges are encouraged to federate. | HEFCE outsourced WP work to a co- ordinating team from 1999 - contract renewed three times. Group led by GL for first two contracts. | The regional agenda is now being dismantled. | There was a time when HEFCE looked to the south-west for WP partnerships. We were seen as leaders because we had gone further than anyone else. Laid sound foundations for subsequent partnerships | Grand vision for LLNs - grounded in Newby's vision of education and education in the States and what can be achieved through partnership |
| | | | Laura Spence incident gave rise to lots of policy | HEFCE influenced by work of WVLLN citing several examples of good practice | HEFCE used short- cycle funding but were asking for sustainable responses. LLNs achieved a lot but were not sustainably funded. Fear no further development work funded by HEFCE. | LLNs saw themselves as part of the skills agenda. LLNs were one way of connecting HE to the skills agenda. | We included employer engagement in the LLN remit - then the HSP came through which would duplicate the work. Aim Higher work was complementary to the LLN | AoA was not a lobby group, it was a co- ordinating group on behalf of HEFCE. It did feedback to HEFCE on issues but it followed the objectives in the tender specifications. HEFCE had no agreed policy on structural change | | At one time the LSC was seen as the buzz body for WP because they were a planning body too. They could plan in a way that HEFCE could not. | Interesting point politically where regional agenda had started to come up. LLNs came from a strong view by HN about institutions working together to create greater public value. |

Appendix 14

Detailed Interview Schedule

| Organisation | Reason to Interview | Proposed Date | Outcome |
|---|--|---|---|
| South West Lifelong Learning Network | Director of network closing down December 2009 Policy interpretation in practice Problems with partnership working in the field | Interview 10 th November 2009 Request for second interview Spring 2010 – no reply | Transcription completed 21 st December 2009 |
| Former CEO of HEFCE Architect of LLNs | Policy on LLNs Wisconsin model Success of LLNs | 17 th May 2010 | Transcript Consent received 15/7/10 |
| Chair National Lifelong Learning Network | Policy trail – interpretation Sustainability Impact on WP | Interview 21 st June 2010 | Transcript |
| HEFCE | Funding of LLNs and other initiative funding Role of HEFCE in WP Partnership working | 2 nd June 2010 | Transcript Consent received 18 th June 2010 |
| HEFCE Director of WP | Questions on book 'The Tertiary Moment' | 14 th June 2010 | Emailled responses to questions 14 th June 2010 |
| Chair, SWLLN Strategy Group (also SUPP Advisory Group) | Partnership working Relationship with other HEIs on board | February 2010 | No interview recorded despite multiple attempts to make contact |
| SWLLN Executive Board member | Lead partner and host to SWLLN History and rationale for involvement Sustainability ALSO lead partner for SUPP | 11 th April 2010 | No interview recorded despite multiple attempts to make contact |
| Recommended by B Payne (also SUPP Advisory Group) | Progression Agreements | February 2010 | No interview recorded |
| SWLLN Executive Board Member | SWLLN Partnerships LLNs | July 2010 | Interview arranged but suggested alternate. Alternate not interviewed. |
| Western Vocational LLN Co-ordinator | Progression Agreements Focus on 14 – 19 Sustainability Partnership working | 12 th April 2010 | Transcript Consent received |
| WVLLN Director | Progression Agreements Focus on 14 – 19 Sustainability Partnership working | 12 th April 2010 | Transcript Consent received |
| WVLLN Progression Co-ordinator | Progression Agreements Admissions Tutors | Interview planned but RW ill – replied to questions by email 2 nd July 2010 | Transcript 11 th July 2010 Consent |
| VETNET Manager | Progression Agreements Focus on 14 – 19 Sustainability Partnership working | Interviewed 26 th July 2010 | Transcript 28 th July 2010 |
| VETNET National Manager | LLN Policy | Email response 10 th April 2010 | Transcript 10 th April 2010 Consent |
| Principal Policy Analyst Centre for Higher Education Research and Information The Open University | Outcomes of the LLNs Unpublished paper on HEFCE policy and LLNs | 21 st June 2010 | Unpublished paper on HEFCE policy and LLNs sent Consent received 21 st June 2010 |
| Foundation Degree Forward GMSA LLN | Questions on paper 'Developing a Lifelong Learning Network : making it fit, not fitting it in' Satisfaction of partnerships Ingredients to make it satisfying Sensitivities of partnerships Policy of LLN and WP | 21 st July 2010 – telephone interview | Transcription 3 rd August 2010 Consent received |
| Former Chair Sussex LLN | LLN Policy | 14 th June 2010 | "Will lifelong learning networks work? A perspective from higher education" Journal of Access Policy and Practice, 2:2 (Spring 2005), 187-205 paper suggested for reading. |
| Chair Teeside LLN Referred by Nicola Oates | Wisconsin model HEFCE policy | 21 st July 2010 | Transcript |
| Action on Access LLNs | Role of LLNs in WP | 27 th July 2010 | Transcript 27 th July 2010 |
| SWLLN UPC College Faculty | Role of SWLLN in relation to UPC University in Somerset | | |
| HEFCE former SW Regional Manager | History of partnerships in SW Policy and LLNs Policy and HE in FE partnerships | 15 th July 2011 | Transcript |
| HEFCE Head of Policy | Referral from Nicola Oates | 13 th June 2011 | No interview carried out |
| AimHigher Western Regional Manager | AimHigher history and purpose Impact and sustainability Partnership working | 19 th July 2012 | Transcript 20/7/2010 Consent |
| HE in FE partnership UPC partnerships | Impact of partnerships on HEI History of partnerships in the south-west | | |
| HE in FE partnership- DWS | Impact of partnerships on HEI History of partnerships in the south-west | 23 rd May 2011 | Transcript Consent received. |
| WVLLN HE in FE partnership | Impact of WVLLN on HEI HE partnership Wider impacts of partnership | 3 rd August 2011 | Transcript |
| WVLLN HE in FE partnerships HEFCE policy | Impact of WVLLN on HEI HE in partnerships HEFCE policy on WP through LLN | 3 rd August 2011 | Transcript |
| Bournemouth HE in FE partnership LLNs in south-west HE in FE partnership | History of Yeovil College/Bournemouth University partnership AOC Involvement in LLNs Policy on HE in FE partnerships | | Transcript |

Appendix 15

Research Authorization



Student Records & Examinations Office
Bath BA2 7AY United Kingdom
Telephone 01225 383234
Facsimile 01225 386166
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/stud-admin/admissions/>
<http://www.bath.ac.uk/grad-office/>

Dr Lisa Isted
Assistant Registrar

Ms Sheila Marie Burden-Leahy
40A Berrow Road
Burdham on Sea
Somerset
TA8 2FX

Our Ref: LIMO

20 January 2010

Student Number: 039056740

Dear Ms Burden-Leahy

Re: Registration for a higher degree

I am pleased to inform you that, at its meeting on 25 November 2009, the Board of Studies for the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences approved your application for registration for a higher degree as follows:

| | | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Dept/School: | Education | Method of study: | Part-Time | Start of Registration: | 1 June 2004 |
| Degree*: | EdD | | | | |
| Title of thesis: | Collaboration to widen participation – a waste of time and effort? | | | | |
| Supervisor(s): | Professor Hugh Lauder | | | | |
| Earliest date on which you may submit your thesis: | | | | | 1 June 2007 |
| Latest date on which you may submit your thesis unless an extension is granted: | | | | | 31 October 2012 |

** If your degree is indicated as 'MPhil/PhD', this means that the Board of Studies has approved your candidature for the degree of MPhil, and recognises that that you wish in due course to transfer to PhD, subject to your successfully completing the transfer process. The thesis submission dates are calculated on the basis of the MPhil regulations and will be extended once you have transferred to PhD registration.*

You are required to attend the University of Bath for 2 weeks each year. Attendance at conferences as appropriate is required. You are also required to keep in contact via email on a monthly basis.

Please note that you are required to give me two months' notice of your intention to submit your thesis, in accordance with Regulation 16.1 (e) (iii). This may be done by letter, email, or by completing the pre-printed HD1 form available from the Graduate Office (Wessex House 3.33). The *University Regulations*, the *Code of Practice for Research Students and their Supervisors* and the document *Specifications for Higher Degree Theses* are available via the Graduate Office website at www.bath.ac.uk/grad-office/.

You are required to keep your registration active by registering annually in October until you have submitted your thesis. You will be notified about arrangements for on-line registration well in advance. In order for the Graduate Office to be able to contact you with this and other important information, it is essential that you notify your Department/School promptly of any change of address.

Yours sincerely


Dr Lisa Isted
Assistant Registrar
Graduate Office

Appendix 16

Declaration of Consent

I freely give my consent to the use of material collected and collated by Sheila Leahy, a student registered at the University of Bath, in pursuit of her research in relation to widening participation in higher education, subject to any caveats below:

I agree to my name being used in relation to quotations without further permission ☐

I should like to be consulted before my name is used in relation to any quotations ☐

I should like to see a copy of any part of the research which uses material provided by me ☐

I should like to have a copy of the final thesis ☐

I understand that the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) are recognised in the organisation, planning, execution, recording and storage of research materials.

Signature

Date

Name in capitals

Address

Phone number

Email

Appendix 17

Membership of position groups in the field of higher education in South-west region (2010)

| | Weston College | University College Plymouth St Mark & St John | Royal Agricultural College | University of the West of England, Bristol | Somerset College | University of Plymouth | Open University, South West | Harpur College | University of Gloucester | University College Falmouth | University of Exeter | Cornwall College | City of Bristol College | University of Bristol | Bournemouth & Poole College | University of Bournemouth | Bath Spa University | University of Bath | Arts University College, Bournemouth |
|---------------------|----------------|---|----------------------------|--|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Universities UK | | | | X | | X | X | | X | | X | | | X | | | X | X | |
| GuildHE | | X | X | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | | | X |
| University Alliance | | | | X | | X | X | | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Million+ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | |
| Russell Group | | | | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| 1994 Group | | | | | | | | | | | X | | | | | | | X | |
| Mixed Economy Group | X | | | | X | | | X | | | | | | | X | | | | |
| 157 Group | | | | | | | | | | | | X | X | | | | | | |

Note - Data obtained from the following websites:

Universities South West. 2011. *Welcome to Universities South West* 2011 [cited 28/02/2011 2011]. Available from <http://www.universitiessouthwest.ac.uk/>

GuildHE. 2010. *Home Page* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.guildhe.ac.uk/>

University Alliance. 2010. *Home Page* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.university-alliance.ac.uk/>

Million+. 2010. *The University Think-Tank* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/>

The Russell Group. 2010. *Home Page*, 28/10/2010 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>

1994 Group. 2010. *About Us* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from <http://www.1994group.ac.uk/>

157 Group. 2010. *Home page* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from www.157group.co.uk/

Mixed Economy Group. 2010. *The Mixed Economy Group of Colleges* 2010 [cited 28 October 2010]. Available from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/organisations/detail/HHE_in_FE/The_Mixed_Economy_Group_of_Colleges

Appendix 18

Case Classification of Institutions in the south-west region

| Institutional Name | Classification | Position Group | |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| University of Bath | Red brick | The 1994 Group | A |
| Bath Spa University | Post-1992 | The Million+ Group | B |
| University of Bristol | Traditional (1872) | The Russell Group | C |
| Bournemouth University | Post-1992 | The University Alliance Group | D |
| The Arts University College, Bournemouth | Post-2004 | The GuildHE | E |
| Dartington College of Arts | Now merged with UCF | | G |
| University of Exeter | Traditional (1855) | The 1994 Group | F |
| University College, Falmouth | Post-2004 | The GuildHE | G |
| University of Gloucestershire | Post-2002 | - | H |
| University of Plymouth | Post-1992 | The University Alliance | I |
| University College Plymouth, Marjon | Post-2004 | The GuildHE | J |
| Royal Agricultural College | Post-2002 | The GuildHE | K |
| University of the West of England | Post-1992 | The University Alliance Group | L |

Proportion of south-west group memberships of national memberships

1 x Russell Group (of 16), 1 x Million+ (of 23), 2 x 1994 Group (of 17), 3 x University Alliance (of 18), 3 x GuildHE (of 21), 1 x non-aligned

| Institutional Name | Classification | Position Group | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----|
| City of Bath | FEC | | M |
| City of Bristol | FEC | 157 Group | N |
| Filton College | FEC | | O |
| Norton Radstock College | FEC | | P |
| St Brendan's | Sixth Form College | | Q |
| Weston College | FEC | | R |
| Highlands College | FEC | | S |
| Cornwall College | FEC | 157 Group | T |
| Truro & Penwith | FEC | | U |
| Bicton College | Land based College | | V |
| City College Plymouth | FEC | | W |
| East Devon College | FEC | | X |
| Exeter College | FEC | | Y |
| Petroc | FEC | | Z |
| Plymouth College of Art & Design | FEC | | A1 |
| South Devon College | FEC | | A2 |
| Bournemouth & Poole | FEC | Mixed Economy Group & 157 Group | A3 |
| Kingston Maurward | Land based College | | A4 |
| Weymouth College | FEC | | A5 |
| Cirencester College | FEC | | A6 |
| Gloucestershire College (inc RFD) | FEC | | A7 |
| Hartpury College | Land based College | Mixed Economy Group | A8 |
| National Star College | FEC | | A9 |
| Stroud College | FEC | | A10 |
| Bridgwater College | FEC | | A11 |
| Richard Huish College | Sixth Form College | | A12 |
| Somerset College of Art & Technology | FEC | Mixed Economy Group | A13 |
| Yeovil College | FEC | | A14 |
| New College | Sixth Form College | | A15 |
| Swindon College | FEC | | A16 |
| Wiltshire College | FEC | | A17 |
| Strode College | FEC | | A18 |

ⁱ The 2010 target was for half of all 18-year-olds to start a higher education course for the first time by the time they are 30. At present, [in January 2003] the cumulative proportion of people entering higher education for the first time between the ages of 18 and 30 is 41 per cent. The bulk of them, 34.5 per cent, will do so aged between 18 and 21. By comparison, only 2 per cent of 27 to 30-year-olds will start a course for the first time before or at aged 30." Thomson, A. (2003) "Analysis: Do we need the 50% target?" Times Higher Education Supplement.

ⁱⁱ Nine years ago Tony Blair took to the stage at the Labour Party's annual conference and set out his bold plan to get 50 per cent of young people into higher education.... Little could he have imagined that almost a decade later the Labour Government would have managed to raise participation among 17 to 30-year-olds by just a fraction of a percentage point - from 39.2 per cent in 2000 to 39.8 per cent last year - and that the political opposition would be scoring points by claiming that, at current rates of progress, the goal will not be achieved for 100 years." Gill, J. (2008b) "Labour concedes that it won't deliver its 50% target on time." Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ The current government coalition between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties does not mention fair access in its policy outline document but instead uses the term "increase social mobility" Hm Government. (2010). "The coalition: Our programme for government." Retrieved 15th October, 2012, from http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_187876.pdf.

^{iv} The QAA scheme applies to all English universities including the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

^v Field theory has also been used to analyze the institutional tensions between teaching and research. Kloot's Kloot, B. (2009). "Exploring the value of bourdieu's framework in the context of institutional change." Studies in Higher Education 34(4): 469-482. analysis demonstrates that research comes first and teaching second in the institutions in his study with profound impacts on learners. These impacts include teaching being seen as a remedial, time-consuming activity within some institutions because it detracts from research (p 477). Kloot concludes that the struggle between teaching and research is a struggle over the structuring of the field and the rules governing the accumulation of capital in the field. Some agents in the field struggle to conserve the structure of the field, while others are intent on transforming it. (p 480). Kloot's work is also concerned with mergers between different tiers of institution within the higher education field in South Africa. His own institution is in the third tier as he defines it. He criticizes Naidoo Naidoo, R. (2004). "Fields and institutional strategy: Bourdieu on the relationship between higher education, inequality and society." British Journal of Sociology of Education 25(4): 457 - 471. for failing to include this tier in her own discussion of the same field Kloot, B. (2009). "Exploring the value of bourdieu's framework in the context of institutional change." Studies in Higher Education 34(4): 469-482..

^{vi} An example was the Laura Spence Affair. Laura applied to the University of Oxford in the year 2000 from a state school. She was predicted (and achieved) top A Level grades in four subjects. Following her interview, she was rejected on the grounds that she 'failed to show potential'. She was subsequently offered a place at Harvard University (and following her graduation from Harvard undertook post-graduate studies at the University of Cambridge). See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2000/may/28/highereducation.Oxbridgeandelitism>

^{vii} See Appendix 1 for an annotated list of policy initiatives about widening participation in higher education which has generally been about increasing places; and a similar list about lifelong learning (a parallel theme in English policy making.) Arguably Lifelong Learning Networks brought these two policy strands together.

^{viii} For example, Plymouth University put its HE in FE partnership under review in 2010. In 2012 it withdrew from its partnership with colleges in Somerset following a strategic review.

^{ix} For example, Plymouth University put its HE in FE partnership under review in 2010. In 2012 it withdrew from its partnership with colleges in Somerset following a strategic review

^x See, for example, Hoare's account of the widening participation activities in two Bristol universities which fails to mention any partnership activity except Aimhigher. Hoare, T., B. Bowerman, et al. (2011). "Widening participation bristol-fashion: Embedding policy and practice at the universities of bristol and the west of england." Institutional Transformation to Engage a Diverse Study Body Retrieved 13th August, 2011.

^{xi} This can be clearly seen in the current debates about the value of the work of artist Damien Hirst where the artist and his London gallery bought an item to avoid the loss of face of a non-sale at auction. Kunzru, H. (2013) "Damien hirst and the great art market heist." The Guardian.

^{xii} The Laura Spence incident provided an opportunity for the then Labour government to attack the admissions policies and procedures of Oxford University. In turn, the university refracted the criticism onto individual applicants failing to apply or failing to prepare properly for admission Ryle, S., K. Ahmed, et al. (2000). Thousands of bright pupils fail to get into oxford. What is different about laura spence is that labour saw an opportunity for point-scoring. The Observer. London.. The elite of the field of political power, the House of Lords, in turn criticized the Labour government for: "*an act of unprovoked aggression...false...a disgrace...a clear message it sends of government animus towards Oxford...MADE IT HARDER RATHER THAN EASIER TO GET STATE SCHOOL CANDIDATES INTO HIGHER EDUCATION...[AND] HARMED BRITAIN'S IMAGE ABROAD*". Bbc. (2000). "Peers condemn oxford attack." Retrieved 10th September, 2011, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/792021.stm>.. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2000/may/28/highereducation.Oxbridgeandelitism1>

^{xiii} Wintour Wintour, P. (2012). Cameron backs down over fair access chief for universities. The Guardian. London. described how David Cameron tried to block the appointment of Professor Les Ebdon to the Director Generalship of OFFA. Ebdon is a "fierce critic of government policy on tuition fees". Further he writes that "...The Conservatives Fair Access to University Group will publish a report criticizing Ebdon's appointment, claiming the don does not appreciate that poor state school education is a key part of the problem...Many of the Russell Group of universities have been concerned by Ebdon's appointment, and fear he will introduce sanctions unless they meet access targets...[they] fear Ebdon will forbid universities from charging the maximum £9,000 tuition fees if they do not adopt access policies giving special consideration to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds...Ebdon said he was willing to press the "nuclear button"...if he believed [an HEI] was not seeking to meet its targets on widening participation."

^{xiv} In an analysis of the field positions of medical schools Brosnan, C. (2010). "Making sense of differences between medical schools through bourdieu's concept of 'field'." Medical Education 44(7): 645-652., he asserts that there are two types of medical school; those receptive to external change which, generally, are committed to producing good general practitioners (GPs); and those not receptive to change which seek to keep their academic prestige and produce hospital consultants Brosnan, C. (2010). "Making sense of differences between medical schools through bourdieu's concept of 'field'." Medical Education 44(7): 645-652.. He further asserts that league table positions are a proxy for institution's having higher quality resources and high

achieving students which in turn attracts further external funding and greater prestige to the detriment of lower placed institutions Brosnan, C. (2010). "Making sense of differences between medical schools through bourdieu's concept of 'field'." *Medical Education* 44(7): 645-652.. Brosnan's description equates to Brown's Brown, P. (2000). "The globalization of positional competition." *Sociology* 34(4): 633 - 653. 'rigging' of the rules to benefit the prospects of professional middle classes, and the 'ranking' of the distribution of resources to universities.

^{xv} For example, in 2012 the University of the West of England has pulled out of its college partnership and the University of Plymouth as pulled out of its partnership with colleges in Somerset as a response to the White Paper.

^{xvi} In order to be able to compete for the 20,000 places taken put into a quasi-market by the 2011 White Paper 18 universities lowered their tuition fees to below an average of £7500. These universities did this by reducing the level of bursary or withdrawing bursaries entirely from low income student s Ross, T. (2011) "University fees lowered to fill degree courses almost a fifth of english universities have cut the price of their degrees as they try to attract more students." *The Telegraph*.. See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/8932400/University-fees-lowered-to-fill-degree-courses.html>

^{xvi} Williams' Williams, R. (2012). Wanted: Food, heating, books. Government policy is driving universities to offer applicants fee waivers, but what poorer undergraduates really need is cash now to help them with their basic living expenses. *The Guardian*. London. analysis of the responses of universities to the 2011 White Paper states that it "tends to be newer universities taking students with largely "non-traditional" backgrounds who are choosing fee waivers over up front support...of those offering fee waivers only, four are Million+ institutions, three...GuildHE...one...University Alliance...10 are non-aligned...No Russell Group or 1994 universities have opted for fee waivers only..."

^{xvi} In February 2012, the High Court in England ruled that the government in increasing in tuition fees to £9000 had "failed to comply with its public sector equality duties by not giving due regard to disabled students and those from ethnic minorities" Shepherd, J. (2012). Students lose court battle over tuition fees. *The Guardian*. London.

^{xvii} The practice of partnership between prestigious institutions for research purposes is a relatively new phenomenon in English higher education. The development of 'The Crick' is causing concern among other elite institutions. Fazackerley, A. (2012). There are three people in this marriage. *The Guardian*. London.

^{xviii} Greenback Greenbank, P. (2006). "Institutional admissions policies in higher education." *International Journal of Educational Management* 20(4): 249 - 260. reaches the same conclusion in his limited study of admissions policies to universities in England. This study does not utilise field theory as its explanatory framework.

^{xix} Tight, M. (1987). "The location of higher education." *Higher Education Quarterly* 41(2): 162 - 183, Tight, M. (2007). "The (re)location of higher education in england (revisited)." *Higher Education Quarterly* 61(2): 250 - 265.

^{xx} The University of Cambridge was placed first and the University of Oxford second in the 2012 Guardian University Guide Shepherd, J. (2011) "University guide 2012: Cambridge tops the guardian league table cambridge beats arch rival oxford to take first place in the guardian ranking of uk universities." *The Guardian*. and in the Complete University Guide 2012 The Complete University Guide. (2012). "University league table 2012 " Retrieved 17th February, 2012, from <http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings..> The University of Oxford was placed fourth and the University of Cambridge placed sixth in the World University rankings 2011-12 Reuters, T. (2011). "World university rankings 2011 - 12." Retrieved 17th February, 2012, from <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2011-2012/top-400.html..>

^{xxi} In the south-west region of England there are 13 institutions which are members of Universities UK. See Figure 13 for details of their location.

^{xxii} In the south-west region of England there are 32 institutions which are members of the AOC.

^{xxiii} The Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) was intended to provide "rapid response" support to business following the 2008 recession. Around two million pounds from this fund was allocated to five universities in the south-west Higher Education Funding Council for England. (2011d). "Economic challenge investment fund - funding allocations." Retrieved 01/03/2011, 2011, from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/challenge/ecif.htm..> Occasionally, a Lifelong Learning Network was successful in obtaining the funding. For example, the West Yorks Lifelong Learning Network obtained nearly one million pounds to help individuals who were affected by the recession West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network. (2010). "Economic challenge investment fund " Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.wylln.ac.uk/ECIF..> Leeds Metropolitan University planned a programme using ECIF funds to enable individuals made redundant to re-train as freelance creative and media consultants. Apart from the benefits of the programme to individuals, the university states that: "*We have also been able to foster relationships with employers and employer organizations...*" Leeds Metropolitan University. (2009). "Overview - economic challenge investment fund." Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/business/D6C0F84774A9405386859BAFAA52AEF4.htm..> In the south-west region, Universities south-west states that: "*HEIs are ideally placed to offer a range of support services through their expertise in skills development and retraining.*" Universities South West. (2009d). "South west heis awarded ecif funding." Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.universitiessouthwest.ac.uk/newsampinfo/tabid/122/Year/2009/Month/4/NewsModule/717/newsId/89/Default.aspx..> This statement is in contrast to Maton's emphatic assertion, above, that universities are not about vocational education, and, calls into question the purpose of a university.

^{xxiv} The Higher Skills Development Project was a partnership in education initiative established between the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, Exeter College and Flybe Herda South-West (2010). *Partnership in education* Partnership in Education Dissemination Conference, Sandy Park, Exeter. to develop Foundation Degrees for the airline industry Exeter College. (2011). "Flybe and exeter college – achieving excellence in partnership." Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.exe-coll.ac.uk/Employers/FlyBe.aspx..> In summing up the benefits of partnership as a dissemination conference, the University of Plymouth's Vice-Chancellor, Wendy Purcell, emphasized its commitment to work-based learning and how to mix and blend academic, vocational and professional learning. The Principal of Exeter College, Richard Atkins felt that it had gained prestige from the collaboration. Flybe had an ambition for a corporate university but realized that it did not have the academic capability to develop one. Flybe's training director, Simon Witts had wanted to make the Skills Pledge Hm Government. (2007). "The skills pledge - a leaflet for employers." Retrieved 18th September, 2011, from http://nationalemployerservice.org.uk/uploads/files/skillspledge_foremployers.pdf. work in practice; and, the University of Exeter felt that their role in the partnership was to develop academically rigorous courses which speak to the world of work Herda South-West (2010). *Partnership in education* Partnership in Education Dissemination Conference, Sandy Park, Exeter..

^{xxv} The Higher Skills Pathfinders were intended to connect universities to the skills policy through the practice of employer engagement. Three projects were funded including one in the south-west region. This project funded twelve posts in universities, which were intended to: "...DEFINE AND TRANSLATE DEMAND FROM EMPLOYERS FOR UNIVERSITY-LEVEL SKILLS TRAINING, AND WORK WITH THE INSTITUTION TO DEVELOP AN APPROPRIATE SOLUTION." Higher Education Funding Council for England. (2010d). "South west higher level skills pathfinder." Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/employer/path/sw/>. Projects included two universities developing bespoke curriculum for employers and the WVLLN developing a new training programme. A literature review of higher skills, and a good practice guide were also funded by the project Bolden, R. and G. Petrov (2008). Employer engagement with higher education: A literature review., University of Exeter., Bolden, R., H. Connor, et al. (2009). Employer engagement with higher education: Defining, sustaining and supporting higher skills provision. Exeter: 45.. The outcomes from the south-west project, in addition to the research, included a 'how to engage with employers toolkit'. The University of the West of England Shell Award was also a major outcome based on a credit accumulation model.

^{xxvi} These charts were constructed in 2011. In 2012, four members of the 1994 group transferred to the Russell Group. The new members are the Universities of Durham, Exeter, Queen Mary London, and York.Bbc. (2012a). "Four universities join elite russell group." Retrieved 3rd July, 2012, from www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-17341478.

^{xxvii} Further controversy within the restricted field, concerned the admissions policy of the University of Bristol which was criticized for the opposite reason to that in the Laura Spence Affair: for favouring good candidates from state school over those from independent schools causing independent schools to boycott the university. Following an investigation, it was determined that the change was simply because of a rise in good quality applicants Curtis, P. (2005). Private schools admit no bias in university selection. *The Guardian*.. The latter case demonstrates the response of the middle-class when their taken-for-granted-access to capital accumulation networks are restricted. However, the field of political remains concerned about widening participation in the restricted field: "I AM CONCERNED THAT THE WHOLE PUSH TO WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION, AND THE IDEA OF HALF OF YOUNG PEOPLE HAVING A CHANCE TO GO TO UNIVERSITY, IS COMING TO BE SEEN AS A MINORITY ISSUE...NOW A MAJORITY OF ALL SOCIAL CLASSES WANT TO GO TO UNIVERSITY" WINTOUR, P. (2008). MAN WITH A MISSION TO OPEN UNIVERSITIES TO THE MANY. INTERVIEW WITH JOHN DENHAM. *THE GUARDIAN*: 12.

^{xxviii} In 2012 four members of the 1994 group transferred allegiance to the Russell Group

^{xxix} In November 2012 it was announced that 10 of the University Colleges would become universities. Refer to Walker, P. (2012). Ten higher education colleges awarded university status. *The Guardian*. London. for more details.

^{xxx} This partnership was dissolved in 2012 Bbc. (2012b). "Ministers asked to review devon medical school split." Retrieved 3rd July, 2012, from www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-18045132.

^{xxxi} Plymouth University's three Vice-Chancellors have respectively promoted extensive HE in FE partnerships and widening participation; becoming a top 10 research institution; and, an enterprise university.

^{xxxii} The New University Challenge Department for Innovation Universities & Skills. (2008). "A new 'university challenge' - unlocking Britain's talent." Retrieved 14th July 2009, 2009, from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2008/anewuniversitychallenge.pdf>. was intended to support the development of new HE centres or university campuses to make higher education more accessible. The priorities to be achieved through the funding were derived from the higher skills agenda and required partnerships within the restricted field and between the restricted and open fields Higher Education Funding Council for England (2009d). A new 'university challenge': Proposals for higher education centres. 2009/07: 1 - 16. King notes that: "local dignitaries...saw in a university for their area a source of pride, economic development and rising status..." King, R. (2004). The contemporary university. *The university in the global age*. R. King. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.. In the 1999 report on Widening Participation in the rural areas of the south-west region Haselgrove, S. (1999). Widening participation from rural areas of the south west, University of Exeter: 1 - 37., it was noted that there were no universities in the counties of Gloucester, Somerset and Wiltshire. In 2011 Somerset and Wiltshire continue not to have a recognized university and were placed first and second in the successful bid listing for this funding source. The University Challenge bid from the Somerset University Partnership Project (SUPP) included Somerset County Council as the lead partner. Somerset Universities Partnership Project (2009b). A demand study of higher education in Somerset - consultant's brief, Somerset County Council.. The project was intended to: "close the gap in economic performance and improve the educational and social well-being of the people in Somerset" Somerset County Council. (nd). "University centres for Somerset." Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/irj/public/services/directory/service?rid=wpcccontent/Sites/SCC/Web%20Pages/Services/Services/Community/University%20for%20Somerset..> And, "The project is not aiming to develop a multi-campus University of Somerset, but to improve collaboration between the FECs and universities operating in Somerset, employers and the wider community to enhance the impact that higher education has on the economy of Somerset." Somerset County Council. (nd). "University centres for Somerset." Retrieved 12th September, 2011, from <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/irj/public/services/directory/service?rid=wpcccontent/Sites/SCC/Web%20Pages/Services/Services/Community/University%20for%20Somerset>. The final aim of several stated is to, "attract investment into Somerset".

^{xxxiii} As the name suggests LLNs also derive from another strand of widening participation practice – Lifelong Learning.

Lifelong Learning is a term which denotes that education is something which should be undertaken throughout life and not be seen as something which is completed after schooling or after a higher education experience. The term was, arguably, first used in the 1920s and has featured as a specific element of higher education activity since Hasan, A. (1996). Lifelong learning. *International encyclopaedia of adult education and training*. A. C. Tuijnsmann. Oxford, Pergamon: 33 - 41.. The 2001 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development report on the Well Being of Nations Oecd, O. F. E. C.-O. A. D. (2001). The well-being of nations, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation: 118. suggested that there should be a joined up approach to policy making for education in the interests of promoting well being at the individual, national and international levels in a sustainable way. Lifelong Learning (p 19) as a concept suggests learning should be lifelong and life-wide (p 19) and include policies to promote access to, and take up of, educational opportunities in order to overcome social exclusion (p 67). The Learning Society was the context for the Dearing Report on higher education Dearing, R. (1997). "Higher education in the learning society - national committee of inquiry into higher education." Retrieved 14th July, 2009, from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/>. which has generated much academic discussion Tight, M. (1998b). "Lifelong learning: Opportunity or compulsion." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 46(3): 251 - 263, Davies, D. (1999). "The learning society: Moving onto the workplace." *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* Vol 1, No 1, Editorial 3. Retrieved 03/06/2009, 2009, from <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/journal/voloneone/editorialthree.htm>, Kilpatrick, S., J. Field, et al. (2003). "Social capital: An analytical tool for exploring lifelong learning and community development." *British Educational Research Journal* 29(3): 417 - 432, Mcclenaghan, P. (2003).

"Response to 'social capital': An analytical tool for exploring lifelong learning and community development." British Educational Research Journal 29(3): 435 - 439.. The re-structuring of English higher education into a tertiary system (discussed above) also falls within this broad field of study Tight, M. (1998a). "Education, education, education! The vision of lifelong learning in the Kennedy, Dearing and Fryer reports." Oxford Review of Education 24(4): 473 - 485, Duke, C., Ed. (2005). The tertiary moment - what road to inclusive higher education. Leicester, National Institute of Adults and Continuing Education, Duke, C. (2005a). The crab's progress: Approaching a tertiary system for lifelong learning. The tertiary moment. What road to inclusive higher education? C. Duke. Leicester, National Institute of Adult & Continuing Education: 1 - 14, Newby, H. (2005c). The crab's progress: Approaching a tertiary system for lifelong learning. The tertiary moment - what road to inclusive higher education? C. Duke. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: 1 - 14.. Lifelong Learning then is one of the academic strands of thought concerned with widening participation in higher education, specifically widening access Higher Education Funding Council for England (1996). Widening access to higher education. Bristol, HEFCE, Fryer, R. (1997). Learning for the twenty-first century: First report of the national advisory group for continuing education and lifelong learning. London, National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning, Edwards, R., P. Raggatt, et al. (1998). Recent thinking in lifelong learning. DfEE. London, Parnham, J. (2001). "Lifelong learning: A model for increasing the participation of non-traditional adult learners." Journal of Further and Higher Education 25(1): 57 -65, Mellors, C. (2009). Lifelong learning – pushing the boundaries. Lifelong Learning – Pushing the Boundaries. C. Mellors. Woodbury Park, Exeter, Schuller, T. and D. Watson (2009). Learning through life inquiry into the future for lifelong learning - summary. Learning Through Life. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: 1 - 12.; and, as a comparison mechanism with other education systems Mumper, M. (2005). The changing politics of college access in the United States. Closing the equity gap the impact of widening participation strategies in the UK and the USA. G. Layer. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.. It is most often deployed when considering matters of adult learners Atkin, C. (2000). "Lifelong learning-attitudes to practice in the rural context: A study using Bourdieu's perspective of habitus." International Journal of Lifelong Education 19(3): 253-265, Edwards, R., P. Armstrong, et al. (2001). "Include me out: Critical readings of social exclusion, social inclusion and lifelong learning." International Journal of Lifelong Education 20(5): 417-428, Fryer, B. (2005). What about the workers? Workplace learning and widening participation. Widening participation - which way forward for English higher education? C. Duke and G. Layer. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: 60 - 79, Field, J., J. Gallacher, et al. (2009). Research transitions in lifelong learning. Abingdon, Routledge., and credit accumulation and transfer processes Harris, N. (2007). A brief update on credit...And lns.. Lifelong Learning Networks are included in this broad field of study in relation to their implications for adult learning Riddell, S., A. Wilson, et al. (2001). "Gender, social capital and lifelong learning for people with learning difficulties." International Studies in Sociology of Education 11(1): 3 - 24, Dentith, K. (2005). A view from the sideline: The role of access to higher education courses in relation to lifelong learning networks. The tertiary moment. What road to inclusive higher education? C. Duke. Leicester, National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education: 75 - 84, Quinn, J., L. Thomas, et al. (2005). From life crisis to lifelong learning - rethinking working-class 'drop out' from higher education. J. R. Foundation.; in relation to their potential to change the higher education landscape Jones, B. (2005). "Lifelong learning networks: Just another initiative or are we glimpsing the future?" Journal for Continuing Liberal Adult Education(29), Newby, H. (2005). "Lifelong learning networks in higher education." Journal of Access Policy & Practice 2(2): 176 - 186, Watson, D. (2005). "Will lifelong learning networks work? A perspective from higher education." Journal of Access Policy & Practice 2(2): 187 - 205, Watson, D. (2009). Lifelong learning and the future of higher education. Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning. NIACE. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education: 1 - 13.; in discussion of university admissions policies and practices Whitston, K. (2005a). Lifelong learning networks, vocational learners, and progression. The tertiary moment. What road to inclusive higher education? C. Duke. Leicester, National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education: 101 - 108, Linking London Lifelong Learning Network (2010). Quality of admissions information for applicants to full-time undergraduate study. London. and, in a comparative way with, for example, higher education in British Columbia Hatt, S. (2006). "Making the connections: What can lifelong learning networks learn from credit transfer in British Columbia?" Journal of Access Policy & Practice 4(1).. Concern was expressed about the impact of LLNs on the Continuing Education departments in research-intensive universities which traditionally provided the local, regional and inclusive collaborative provision Jones, B. (2005). "Lifelong learning networks: Just another initiative or are we glimpsing the future?" Journal for Continuing Liberal Adult Education(29)..

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The structure of post-18 learning in England has been the subject of debate about developing a truly integrated tertiary system Watson, D. (2005). The tertiary moment? The tertiary moment. What road to inclusive higher education? C. Duke. Leicester, National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education: 133 - 147.. Many "hope for a tertiary future" Jones, B. (2005). "Lifelong learning networks: Just another initiative or are we glimpsing the future?" Journal for Continuing Liberal Adult Education(29). but believe that: "*post-compulsory education has been through so many ...re-organisations...without sufficient attention to transitions...created a hyper-sensitive superstructure...*" Watson, D. (2005). The tertiary moment? The tertiary moment. What road to inclusive higher education? C. Duke. Leicester, National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education: 133 - 147.. A tertiary system would be one that included elements of the Wisconsin model of planned, mission specific institutions (discussed above), and of the credit accumulation and transfer system (discussed below). A tertiary system would have no divide between further and higher education and would allow for widening participation through seamless progression to local institutions for each level of learning. The proposal of a single field of higher education albeit structured into two parts suggests that steps have been taken to develop the tertiary model.

xxxv

During the 1990s, considerable time was spent in trying to change the institutional practice of the restricted field through the introduction of a national CATS system. A CATS system gives a value to each module of learning within a qualification. It is now ubiquitous within English higher education but was controversial when first proposed. The intended outcome of the system was to develop a flexible mass HE system Allen, R. (1995). The development of a flexible mass higher education system in the UK: A challenge to management. Credit-based systems as vehicles for change in universities and colleges. R. A. G. Layer. London, Kogan Page. 3: 1 - 24.. The CATS system was derived from the American model. Adoption of the CATS system was intended to: "stimulate and support major change in higher education institutions and in the values, practices and mental models of academics and managers" Allen, R. (1995). The development of a flexible mass higher education system in the UK: A challenge to management. Credit-based systems as vehicles for change in universities and colleges. R. A. G. Layer. London, Kogan Page. 3: 1 - 24.. Credit-based systems enable learners to study modules of learning which build into a qualification. The modules are available at a range of institutions and the modules accredited by each institution are accepted at every other institution. As such credit-based systems challenge the restricted field, particularly research-intensive universities...but not in America where they are taken for granted Allen, R. (1995). The development of a flexible mass higher education system in the UK: A challenge to management. Credit-based systems as vehicles for change in universities and colleges. R. A. G. Layer. London, Kogan Page. 3: 1 - 24.. For example, the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) has

multiple direct links with local community colleges and provides a recognized transfer route into California State University and the collaboration is recognized by the State of California European Access Network (2001). Pyramids or spiders? Cross-sector collaboration to widen participation - learning from international experiences: 1 - 65.. Credit systems were attractive to those in higher education who worked against the grain of "research first...students second" Allen, R. (1995). The development of a flexible mass higher education system in the uk: A challenge to management. Credit-based systems as vehicles for change in universities and colleges. R. A. G. Layer. London, Kogan Page. 3: 1 - 24., and who worked to develop bottom up, rather than top down management systems. The promotion of credit systems in institutions was, however, based around a fairly limited group of individuals. They could be characterized as gurus, some of whom later became Vice-Chancellors (with the unsaid suggestion that this group has been influential in calling for change in the restricted field of higher education). Credit systems had their own practitioner networks based on regional credit consortia Allen, R. (1995). The development of a flexible mass higher education system in the uk: A challenge to management. Credit-based systems as vehicles for change in universities and colleges. R. A. G. Layer. London, Kogan Page. 3: 1 - 24.. Allen asserted that: "credit-based systems are an element of a scenario in which universities and colleges are being transformed" Allen, R. (1995). The development of a flexible mass higher education system in the uk: A challenge to management. Credit-based systems as vehicles for change in universities and colleges. R. A. G. Layer. London, Kogan Page. 3: 1 - 24. Yet, ten years later, Parry notes that FECs stand outside the credit arrangements for universities in the UK, and were yet to be widely regarded or accepted as the normal setting for undergraduate education Parry, G. (2005b). The collegiate and transfer functions of further education colleges in the united kingdom. Annual Conference of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges. Boston, Massachusetts, Focus.. HE in FE partnerships do use the credit system, however, it is the transfer element which is problematic, particularly where a student wants to transfer to another institution other than the HE partner. In my own experience students completing a two-year Foundation Degree who would be entitled to automatic progression to a third year honours programme at the partner HEI, can only gain entry to year two of a degree at a local Russell Group university. CATS systems are being used in different ways as the UWE Shell Framework demonstrates.

^{xxxvi} The county of Cornwall was designated as an area of deprivation which met the requirements for EU funding. In the context of this study partnership activities in Cornwall such as the Combined Universities Cornwall (CUC) and the Peninsula Medical School are outside the scope of the study.

^{xxxvii} Appendix 18 table the relevant institutions, classification, membership of position group and case alias.

^{xxxviii} The traditional University moved from the 1994 group to the Russell Group in early 2012

^{xxxix} University D was still technically a College of Higher Education but is classified with the post-92s for ease of understanding

^{xl} The retired partnership manager of University D recounts how the University established 'cheap' courses such as in the field of business to grow students numbers on a fees only basis. At that time, the Local Education Authority paid student tuition fees and the HE funding body supplemented this with a grant. Fees-only students were not included in the calculation for grants.

^{xli} University L grew its HE in FE partnership to 18 FECs between 2000 - 2003

^{xlii} The Diploma was a vocational qualification, which has now been discontinued, but was equivalent to at least three A Levels and contained a project

^{xliii} The VETNET LLN is now the VETNET LLN Association and is a paid membership organization hosted at the Royal Agricultural College. (www.vetnetlln.ac.uk)